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From a Young Bolshevik to a Professional Writer

A critical study of Wang Meng's novels with reference

to his writing from the 1950s to the 1990s

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2004

From a Young Bolshevik to a Professional Writer

*A critical study of Wang Meng's novels with reference
to his writing from the 1950s to the 1990s*

王蒙与王蒙作品研究

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Abstract

Wang Meng is one of China's most high profile and prolific writers, having produced a substantial body of fictional work since the 1950s, much of which has surprised readers and critics alike because of its high level of innovation, and because of its challenge to the dominant Chinese traditional literary discourse. Wang Meng is significant for employing new fictional forms and styles as vehicles for examining the contentious issues that arise in Chinese society. His works are often regarded as a mirror to reflect developments in society during different stages, and in different political situations. In recent years, Wang Meng has continued to explore universal themes and unique representational modes, but prefers to locate them within the Chinese tradition in his writing. It would be hard to think of another writer in China that could compare with Wang Meng, in terms of his rich and highly productive literary works; his complex and unusual personal life experiences; his consummate writing skill; his writing techniques; his well-planned literary structures; his colourful use of narrative voice; his talent in using his own style of fictional language; his ability to appropriate literary styles from a diverse range of sources, both traditional and modern, Chinese and foreign, and synthesise them into something uniquely his own; his courage and his liberal values; his close attention to developments in society; his tumultuous political life; his setbacks and successes as a professional writer.

This thesis focuses on an analysis of Wang Meng's major literary works from the early 1950s to the 1990s. It utilizes established Western critical theories such as: realism, Socialist Realism, modernism, postmodernism and "stream-of-consciousness". It provides a focused textual analysis of a number of Wang Meng's stories that emerged in the broad context of contemporary Chinese literature. It aims to decode a selection of Wang Meng's major representative works published between the 1950s and the 1990s, and attempts to interpret the characteristics of Wang Meng's writing at different stages. By doing so, the thesis attempts to enrich and develop the

established Western theories referred to above by means of an analytical rereading of the selected texts.

The thesis consists of five chapters, with an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction provides some preliminary remarks, and outlines some general but fundamental issues, as well as a brief note on Wang Meng's life. Chapter one begins with an examination of fictional writing as the main form in contemporary Chinese literature, followed by a further comparative discussion of Wang Meng's novels and short stories, to locate his place in the Chinese literary world. Chapter two applies realism, in particular, Socialist Realism, as one of the literary theories to examine Wang Meng's early works. Chapter three mainly attempts to evaluate the narrative technique in Wang Meng's stories, with special reference to his experimental works which were published in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Chapter four studies the influence of Western stream-of-consciousness in Wang Meng's fiction writing, with detailed reference to his two short stories: *Eyes of the Night* and *Dream of the Sea*. Chapter five makes a close reading of Wang Meng's *Bolshevik Salute*, which revolves around a basic theme—the quest for the self as an individual entity with a degree of coherence and intelligibility. The final chapter draws together some concluding remarks pertaining to the thesis as a whole.

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Wang Xiaoning
Hamilton

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Introduction

Concepts of Criticism: Towards a Method of Interpretation

我写作，因为我是王蒙。我写作，因为我爱生活。

—— 王 蒙

I write, because I am Wang Meng. I write, because I love life.

—— Wang Meng

Wang Meng, one of the most controversial writers in China today, has produced many fictional works since the 1950s, capturing the attention of Chinese readers and critics with literary innovations which fundamentally challenged the dominant traditional forms of writing. Acclaimed as one of the most prominent figures in the field of Chinese literature, Wang Meng is significant for employing new fictional forms and styles as vehicles for exploring contentious contemporary social issues.¹ His works are often regarded as a literary “mirror”, reflecting social developments that occur as a result of changes in the political arena. In recent years, Wang Meng has continued to explore universal themes and unique representational modes in his writing, and his works continue to be popular and enjoyed by readers not only throughout China, but also in other parts of the world.

A brief note on Wang Meng's life and works

Among Chinese contemporary writers, none has troubled or challenged so many readers in China today like Wang Meng. And none

has had to face bravely irreverent, defiant or merely exploitative responses from the public and society. It is impossible to find another writer in China that can compare with Wang Meng, in terms of his unusual personal life experiences, his unique writing skills, his distinguished writing techniques, his well-planned structures, his clever use of narrative voice, his talent in using his own style of fictional language, his liberal, but tumultuous political life, his sufferings and his successes as a professional writer. In his nearly fifty-year long writing career, he has become one of the most well-known and controversial fictional writers in China.

Wang Meng's biography, like that of many other Chinese writers of his generation, is strongly marked by the circumstances of China's recent history.²

Wang Meng's home town is Nanpi County³ in Hebei Province's Cangzhou Prefecture (河北省沧州地区南皮县), but he was born in Beijing (at that time it was called Beiping (北平), in Shatan⁴ (沙滩) district on 15 October, 1934, while his parents were in the capital pursuing their studies.

Soon after Wang Meng was born, his family moved back to Nanpi County. In 1937, upon the outbreak of the "July 7th Incident,"⁵ his whole family moved to Beijing, or to put it another way, they fled to safety. Even now Wang Meng still has "dim memories of fleeing in a horse-drawn cart, staying in roadside inns, and listening to horses chewing hay at night."⁶ In his childhood, he spoke Cangzhou⁷ dialect at home and Beijing dialect at school.

Before reaching school age he attended the kindergarten attached to a charitable institution in Fragrant Hills⁸ (香山). It was located in the

old Earth King Temple⁹ (地坛), which later became the Third Girls' High School. (北京第三女中)

In 1940, before the age of six, Wang Meng took and passed the tests for the primary school attached to Beijing Normal School. The head teacher of the second grade, Hua Xialing (华霞林), was an outstanding teacher. Wang Meng admits even today that "She set an excellent example for me, both in character and learning, and I will never forget her."¹⁰ In 1945, after the surrender of Japanese, his teacher responded to the call of the, then, Nationalist government and, being a single woman, signed up to promote the "national language" (国语) on the newly recovered island of Taiwan.

In 1945 Wang Meng skipped a grade and went to the private Pingmin Middle School. (平民中学) He did this because entering a public middle school would have required a primary school diploma, and he had not graduated from primary school. Wang Meng was an excellent student in primary and junior high school. Pingmin Middle School was located at what is now Beijing's No 41 Middle School. (北京第四十一中学) Japan's surrender, coming the same year that he became a Middle School student, made Wang Meng wild with joy. He was young, but like many other young people then, he had enough national pride, as a Chinese, to take sides against the Japanese. Thus he joined in the warm welcome given to the Kuomintang "National Army." (国民党的国民军)

But the nationalist government soon disappointed him. The decadence of the old society was giving rise to a great popular revolutionary movement. From 1946 he established frequent contact with underground Party workers. He read Marxist pamphlets, the

writings of Mao Zedong, and literary works of the Revolution, such as: *On Coalition Government*, *An Outline History of Social Development*, *Philosophy for the Masses*, *The White-Haired Girl*, *The Rhymes of Li Youcai* and *The Iron Stream*.¹¹ All of these books he had to read in secret before Liberation.

On October 10, 1948, five days before turning fourteen, Wang Meng joined the Chinese Communist Party. He became a member of the underground Party and immediately threw himself into the struggle to develop the organization, accumulate power, prepare for Liberation and protect Beiping. In those days of great struggle, his highest ideal was to become a professional revolutionary.

In late January of 1949 Beiping was peacefully liberated. In March that year, Wang Meng became a cadre in the Beiping working committee of the New Democratic Youth League. (北平新民主主义青年联盟工作委员会) In August he went to study at the Central League Academy (中央团校). In May 1950, having finished his studies at the Academy, Wang Meng was assigned to the Third District (第三区), later becoming the Dongsi District (东四区) Working Committee of the Beijing Youth League. He stayed with the committee until 1956, beginning as a functionary and later becoming deputy secretary.

During these years, Wang Meng was mostly involved in liaison work with League chapters in several middle schools. The young people, growing up in this age of great turmoil and progress, possessed spiritual qualities that were both stirring and fascinating--especially the politically precocious "Young Bolsheviks." The impression those young middle school students left on Wang during those days will never be effaced--of course he himself thought that he too was one of them.

In the early 1950s, China began a massive movement of socialist construction. Wang Meng wanted to study architectural engineering so that he could take his place on the front line of national construction. From an early age Wang Meng was equally fond of literature and science. He was greatly influenced in the Fifties by reading the novel *Number One Profession* (第一个职务) which was written by the Soviet author S.P. Antonov. Because of that book, the sight of a building going up exerted an irresistible attraction on him.¹² Wang Meng's application to take the entrance examination to enter university, however, was denied, so his wish to put up buildings on a construction site did not come to pass.

Not far from the courtyard of the Communist Youth League District Committee where Wang Meng was working was a Xinhua Bookstore where he often went to inhale the fragrance of printers' ink. There, he would stroll up and down through the shelves of books. Wang Meng hoped one day that his own book - his own heart - would be displayed there. So he decided to write a story. He used his high school experience for his first novel *Long Live Youth* (青春万岁), which was written in the year from 1954 to 1955. (A small part of it was published in instalments in the Shanghai newspaper Wenhui bao in 1957.) But it was not until 1979 that the full text appeared in book form.¹³ Wang Meng continued his literary activities and wrote a number of short stories, one of which was the controversial *The Young Newcomer at the Organization Department*,¹⁴ (组织部新来的年轻人 1956).

The *Young Newcomer at the Organization Department* is the story of a young, idealistic teacher, Lin Zhen, who gets a job at the district party office and soon finds himself in conflict with bureaucratic older party officials. The story describes the disillusionment of this young party member who tries to put his ideals into practice and then meets with

cynicism and lack of interest on the part of the older generation. The story appeared during the Hundred Flowers Campaign,¹⁵ and was the focus of intensive debates, from the end of 1956 to mid-1957.¹⁶ The debates were aimed at gaining control of the liberalization in the field of literature, introduced during this campaign. The story was written as a contribution to the debate on socialist realism in China at the time. Although Wang Meng was not officially mentioned as a target, he fell victim to the Anti-Rightist Campaign (反右运动) in 1957 because of this story.¹⁷ Like many others active in the domain of culture, he was sent to a village near Beijing to do physical labour and to “learn from the people”.

From 1958 to 1962, Wang Meng did manual labour on the outskirts of Beijing. In 1962, for a short period, he went to teach Chinese at the Beijing Normal College, (北京师范学院), and that same year saw the publication of his short stories *Eyes* (眼睛 1962) and *Night Rain* (夜雨 1962).

In October 1963, Wang Meng joined a reading group under the auspices of the Chinese Writers Union (中国作家联盟). At a meeting of this group he asked the leaders of the union for permission to go to a village in a border province, where he could get some experience of real life, reform his thinking and thus write something new. His request was approved. At the end of that year he went with his family to Wulumuqi (乌鲁木齐), the capital city of Xinjiang. For sixteen years, from 1963 to 1979, he lived and toiled there. From 1965 to 1971, in particular, Wang Meng had some valuable and unforgettable experiences at the Bayandai Commune (巴彦岱公社) in the Yili District (伊犁地区), where he served for a time as Deputy Chief of the No.2 Production Brigade. (第二大队副大队长) He himself thought he fit in perfectly with the Uygur peasants there¹⁸. For six years he lived as one of the

family with an old peasant named Abdul Rahman and his wife. He amazingly became proficient enough in the Uyghur language (which belongs to the Turkic group of the Altaic language family) to hold fluent conversations and even do simultaneous translations at meetings. Wang Meng was also able to translate Uyghur literary works into Chinese. Because he was protected by Uyghur peasants and local cadres, he did not suffer any personal abuse during the Cultural Revolution. Once a concerned older cadre, after hearing of Wang Meng's experiences, felt that Wang's safe weathering of the ten years of chaos during the Cultural Revolution was "nothing short of a miracle."¹⁹ After two years at a "May 7th" cadre school (五. 七干校), he began in 1973 to work as translator and editor, first at the Cultural Bureau of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (新疆维吾尔自治区文化局) and then at the Writers' Union.²⁰ (作家协会)

All this makes it impossible to categorize Wang Meng's stay in Xinjiang as an "internal exile." His stay in Xinjiang was a positive experience for him, and he did it willingly.²¹ It enriched his personal experience and knowledge tremendously. It juxtaposed him between interior and border areas, between city and country, between two brother peoples-- the Han and the Uyghurs-- and out of these contrasts he came to understand a great deal. He has no regrets over spending sixteen years in Xinjiang. On the contrary, even today, he feels that he reaped many rewards. He always mentions that the cadres, the writers and the people of Xinjiang were very kind to him while he was there.²²

Wang Meng was ecstatic over the events of October 1976.²³ The passing of one of the most negative periods in China's recent history, and the beginning of a new era filled him with hope. He probably could not have foreseen that the normalization of the state of affairs would go as far as it did. Wang Meng's "Rightist" label was removed in 1979

following the death of Mao (1976) and the launching of Deng Xiaoping's era of reform (1978) and opening-up to the West. Wang Meng began writing full-time, becoming one of the most innovative figures in fiction. Despite his somewhat conservative political leanings, his fiction is experimental, or even modernist, although Wang Meng himself seems reluctant to accept this label because of its negative connotations.²⁴ He prefers to locate his experiments within Chinese tradition, although his work is strongly influenced by Russian and Soviet socialist realism models. The 'self as hero' makes a frequent appearance in his early post-rehabilitation fiction, much of which seems to be based on his own experience. His better known works--the short stories and novellas such as *Bolshevik Salute* (布礼 1979), *Eyes of the Night* (夜的眼 1979), *Butterfly* (蝴蝶 1980), *Kite Streamers* (风筝飘带 1980) , and many others--cover every aspect of contemporary life in China.

In the early 1980s, "his name was associated with the introduction of the stream of consciousness narrative technique."²⁵ His 1979 novel, *Bolshevik Salute* can be read as a sequel to his controversial story of 1956, *Young Newcomer at the Organization Department*, which brought about his exile. Breaking with the chronological narrative characteristic of post-1949 fiction, *Bolshevik Salute* moves back and forth between past and present in a carefully structured way, chronicling the highly subjective reflections of an idealist Rightist—a radical and controversial departure at the time. To Wang Meng, stream of consciousness was not a Western gadget, but an avenue for explorations of guilt and reflexive thinking for a generation of revolutionaries trying to reorient themselves in the post-Mao era.²⁶ This is strikingly illustrated in stories in the confessional mode such as *Butterfly* which asks the eternal question "Who am I?"

Wang Meng subsequently wrote his famous controversial novel *The Man with Movable Parts* (活动变人形 1986), which is generally regarded as a piece of fiction that exposes a “family scandal”. It stirred up a heated debate in the late 1980s about the cultural conflict between East and West. Other major works of this period include the novella *The Strain of Meeting* (相见时难 1982), and collections of short stories.

As a result of measures to introduce the principles of merit and expertise into government during the reform, Wang Meng was appointed Minister of Culture (文化部长) in 1986. He said, “Now I am loaded with more and more work, I have less and less time for myself, but I will never put down my pen.”²⁷ And he never did. While serving as Minister of Culture for a country with an enormous population, he not only kept on writing, but entered a new phase in his career. “It is because life in China has become more complex, its tempo increased,” he wrote, “that the themes and rhythms of my stories have changed accordingly.”²⁸ Taking up where he left off with the humour of the Xinjiang interlude, Wang Meng departed from the subjectivity of stream of consciousness and branched off into a wide array of farce, fantasy, fable, allegory, mock heroics, parody, and other experiments in form and language. His tone was now hilarious, facetious, mock-serious, deceptively innocent, ironic, and enigmatic. He left the beaten track of the accusatory/expository fiction of the early post-Mao era to create a new kind of writing, where the tone and manner are just as important as the subject matter.

Wang Meng’s shorter pieces in the fantastic mode are the first of their kind in contemporary Chinese writing. “Some of them hark back to the ancient Chinese fables he parodies, while others (such as “*To Alice*” 致爱丽丝 1986) belong to the universal family of *Alice in Wonderland* and Edward Albee’s somewhat sinister *Little Alice*.”²⁹ He often indulges

in reckless, free-flowing wordplay that combines philosophic aphorisms with the earthy folk humour of popular talk shows. With Wang Meng, words sometimes seem to have legs and wander off on their own.³⁰ His language is self-reflexive, and some words, such as those in *Thrilling* (来劲 1987) and its sequel, call attention to themselves and generate meaning of their own.³¹

Wang Meng reserves a deep understanding and compassion for the sorely buffeted academics of China, who find themselves lost in this new age of galloping materialism. Their frustrations, dilemmas, and weaknesses are brought out superbly in such stories as *The Wind on the Plateau* (高原的风 1985). These mark a significant departure from the sentimental and the pathetic that had dominated stories of victimization during the first phase of post-Mao writing. Wang Meng eschews the emotive for the critical spirit of self-inquiry, rationality, transcendence, and abstraction. Therein, too, lies the source of his strength and humour. As he has remarked: “When tears are exhausted, laughter takes over. A sense of humour is a sense of superiority.”³²

Some of the stories which will be discussed in this thesis belong to, mainly, the middle and late eighties, some even to the nineties, when Chinese society evolved into a form of controlled liberalisation combined with apparently uncontrollable desocialisation. Just as words tend to run away on their own, Wang Meng sees social, economic, and cultural forces also running out of bounds with barely a passing nod to the powers that be. In such short whimsical pieces as *The Storm Dies Down* (风息浪止 1983), *Wordless Tree* (无言的树 1985) and *Gleaming Bells* (铃的闪 1986) Wang Meng playfully brings out the absurdities and unpredictabilities of the situation.³³

Deeply aware of the contradictions of the age and concerned about his country and its people, Wang Meng still transcends concrete issues in his stories about the living, changing China.³⁴ Rather, he relies on metaphor to reflect on the complexity and relativity of human affairs. Whether it is the quest for the ideal family menu in *The Stubborn Porridge* (坚硬的稀粥 1989), also known as *Hard Porridge*, especially to overseas readers), or the last word on the great “bathology” debate between husband and wife,³⁵ or among friends and colleagues such as in another of Wang Meng’s short stories *Winter Topic* (冬天的话题 1985), he rejects clear-cut, black-and white stereotypes and suspends judgment. Reform, elections, meritocracy, tradition, family, academic politics, generation gaps, fashionable theories, Chinese medicine, Western technology--Wang Meng calls everything into question, exposes it to scrutiny, and turns it into entertainment in what may be called (for lack of a better term) “dialectic absurdism.”³⁶ *Heat Waves of Summer* (夏之波 1988) makes a subtle analogy between the sometimes misplaced fervour of reform measures and an aborted liaison, both brought on by a passing “heat wave”. He sees many things as “heat waves” that come and go-- “Is it subtle thinking or complicated nonsense?” to borrow from the title of his October 1993 talk at Harvard University in the United States of America. Wang Meng relies on the down-to-earth common sense of people like those in *The Stubborn Porridge* who finally stop racking their brains over “the great eating debate” and manage to feed their bellies in spite of “theories and terms and methodology.” Without resorting to diagnoses or prescriptions, Wang Meng evidently is confident that “all things in heaven and earth find their own balance.”³⁷

Wang Meng stepped down from office in September, following the June Fourth Tiananmen Incident, 1989. (The news was officially announced through the Xinhua News Agency, and it received

sensational responses both from within and outside of China.³⁸). In a country known for stringent censorship, which had taken away twenty-one years of his life for an innocent short story, and at a time when the suppression of dissent was fresh in people's minds, he decided to sue the official publication of the Writer's Association in China for its libellous attack on *The Stubborn Porridge*. Therein lies the reason why "much of Beijing's intellectual and cultural world is transfixed by the remarkable spectacle of a victim fighting back, particularly because he is one of China's most celebrated writers and a former Minister of Culture."³⁹ Wang Meng is not beyond a shot of the mischievous, too, writing a sequel to his work under attack, *Summer Wave. Capriccio a Xiang Ming* (向明随想曲 1988), a sequel to *Thrilling*, was also written in response to an attack on *Thrilling* by a scribbler who had totally misread the piece.⁴⁰

Wang Meng has been honoured with many literary prizes at home and abroad, and his works have been translated into all the primary Asian and European languages.⁴¹ He has been invited to many countries, including America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Italy, Russia, and Japan either as a writer in residence at various universities or delivering public lectures.⁴² So far about 14 publishing houses outside of China have published many of his stories and literary works since 1980. In order to bring Chinese readers closer to world literature, Wang Meng also tried to translate some foreign short stories into Chinese. His life experience in Xinjiang during the 1960s and the 1970s enabled him to handle the translation of a number of Uygur and Russian literary pieces quite easily, and he also translated seven New Zealand short stories,⁴³ written by Francis Pound, Jennifer Compton, Iain Sharp, Patricia Grace and Janet Frame between 1990-1992.

But personally he thinks that the best thing that has happened to him is that, despite all of the tumultuous events in his life, he has managed to keep writing.⁴⁴

Looking only at the brief facts mentioned above, it is easy to see that Wang Meng is a key figure in the literary field in China. During half a century of his career as a writer, he has published more than a hundred books in the form of novels, novellas, short stories, reportage articles and essays, by more than a dozen publication houses, both in and outside of China, with a total of ten million words, published in fourteen different languages. Many of these publications have been awarded top literary prizes.

It is not only the historical opportunity and his extraordinary personal experiences, but also his talent and wisdom, his creative artistic imagination, his moderate approach and his ability to adjust to life, and above all, his hard-working effort, that have made Wang Meng a prominent literary figure in China. Since Wang Meng and his political and literary experiences have followed all the various political movements and social changes in recent Chinese history, then his achievements can also be regarded as an important dimension of the 50 years of development of contemporary Chinese literature. Through studying Wang Meng and his works, people can have a more vivid picture of the developments in modern Chinese literature, as well as in Chinese society as a whole.

Methodology

The methodology of literary criticism contains no hard and fast rules. The terminology and approaches adopted by literary critics are undergoing a continual process of invention and reinvention. The same text can be interpreted from a number of approaches and emphases which co-exist under the broad umbrella of literary criticism. As Wayne C. Booth aptly points out, the literary process “is an art, not a science, but this does not mean that we are necessarily doomed to fail when we attempt to formulate principles about it.”⁴⁵

Any number of “principles” may be used to interpret Wang Meng’s stories under review in this study. There are some fundamental differences in the “principles” formulated by Western literary critics and those formulated by their Chinese counterparts. An examination of the approaches to contemporary Chinese fiction by contemporary Western and Chinese critics, whether from literary or broader socio-political standpoints, will assist in the establishment of a method of interpretation most suited to this study. Chinese critical theories will be briefly discussed throughout various chapters in this thesis. The discussion will confine itself to Chinese approaches to and theories of literary practice which developed under the banner of Marxist literary theory in the Maoist era, but which continued to be influential until at least the early 1980s. Primarily under the direction of the Maoist literary line, the mode of “realism” was propagated as playing the leading role on the 20th century Chinese literary stage. The important position of “realism” in Chinese fiction from the 1920s to the 1980s is undeniable.

Realism

Realism was first used as a literary term in France, where it was applied to literary and visual forms which aim for the accurate reproduction of the world as it is. "Literary realism emerged in the late 18th and 19th centuries concomitantly with the rise of the novel and coterminous with industrial capitalism."⁴⁶ In general, it means the use of the imagination to represent things as common sense supposes them to be.

19th-century novels are often described, from a 20th-century perspective, as classic realist texts; the world of the novel is presented to the reader as if it were a direct mirroring or reflection of the real world, rather than an ideologically saturated interpretation of the real. The term most often used to describe the strategy of the realist text is transparency. The illusion of transparency created by realism is contrasted with modernist writing which supposedly foregrounds its textuality.

Realism is also used in modern literature in opposition to what is regarded as sentimentalism-the disposition to represent feelings as nicer than we know them to be; an illogical extension of this use of the term is sometimes to apply it to literature that represents experience as nastier than we know it to be. Finally, realism in literature is sometimes related to nominalism, *i.e.* the realist writer is he who represents individuals rather than types; in this sense, modern literary realism is the opposite of the realism of medieval philosophy.

Socialist Realism

After the 1949 Chinese Communist revolution literature was required to depict the great social transformations taking place. Communist Party leaders advocated socialist realism which was marked by strict adherence to party doctrine and by a narrow emphasis on the credible depiction of external reality.

In 1951 Zhou Yang stated that: “[China] must learn from other countries and especially from the Soviet Union. Socialist Realist literature and art are the most beneficial spiritual food for the Chinese people and the broad ranks of intelligentsia and youth.”⁴⁷ In the following years, there was a continuous stream of pronouncements on the importance of Socialist Realism, such as at the Second Congress of the Federation, in September 1953, when the theory and practice of ‘Socialist Realism’ (社会主义现实主义) became official policy in literature and the arts, signalling both dependence on the Soviet Union (where the term originated in the 1930s) and the determination of the authorities to have the controlling voice in the production of a new socialist literature for the new age.⁴⁸

‘Socialist Realism’ (as has been indicated) was originally an import from the Soviet Union. In its place of birth, the role of literature and art was redefined in 1932 when the newly created Union of Soviet Writers proclaimed this theory as the compulsory foundation for all literary practice. “As conceived by Stalin, Zhdanov, and Gorky, socialist realism prescribed a generally optimistic picture of socialist reality and of the development of the Communist revolution. Its purpose was education in the spirit of socialism. Its practice is marked by strict adherence to party doctrine and to conventional techniques of realism. Socialist realism has been widely condemned as stifling to artistic

values. After the death of Stalin in 1953 some relaxation of strictures was evident, although socialist realism continued as the official doctrine.”⁴⁹ A similar approach to the creation of art and literature was also enforced in China for a time, especially in the 1950s.

Modernism and Postmodernism

In post-Mao China, many writers working in the fields of art, film, literature and philosophy posed an uncompromising challenge to traditional forms and ways of thinking. Some of them had gradually come to realise that, for the past three decades, forms of expression, both literary and political, had become stagnant and ritualised, and were not able to capture the authentic rhythm of Chinese society. They therefore felt that it was necessary to go beyond the earlier narrow boundaries that constrained literature, and break away from the conventional discourse in order to gain insight into contemporary China. They drew their intellectual inspiration substantially from Western literary theories, such as Modernism and Postmodernism.

Twentieth-century literature may be divided into two phases: Modernism and Postmodernism. In both phases, changes in literary technique and subject matter are closely linked with comparable transformations in music, art and architecture. According to the dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory: “Modernism is a comprehensive but vague term for a movement (or tendency) which began to get under way in the closing years of the 19th century and which has had a wide influence internationally during much of the 20th century. The term pertains to all the creative arts, especially poetry, fiction, drama, painting, music and architecture.”⁵⁰ There have been various theories as to when the movement (or its tendencies) was at its

height and as to whether the modernist movement is actually over. Some scholars have suggested that modernism, as an innovative and revivifying movement, was played out by the late 1940s, and that it was then that postmodernism began. In fact, such movements, of their nature, do not just start and stop; the evolution is gradual.⁵¹

As far as literature is concerned modernism reveals a breaking away from established rules, traditions and conventions, fresh ways of looking at man's position and function in the universe and many (in some cases remarkable) experiments in form and style. It is particularly concerned with language and how to use it (representationally or otherwise) and with writing itself. Thus, structuralism was from the outset closely connected with modernist tendencies, though the theories of structuralism did not gain a strong foothold until the 1960s, by which time postmodernism was well established as a new movement.

Postmodernism is a movement in painting, literature, television, film and the arts generally. There are disagreements about some of the definitions of postmodernism, but some core features that most agree on include the following: (1) Pastiche: a putting together of elements of style from radically different contexts and historical epochs. (2) Reflexivity: the capacity to be self-aware, often accompanied by a sense of irony. (3) Relativism: the absence of objective standards of truth. (4) An opposition to certain classical artistic techniques such as narrative - telling a story in an ordered sequence closed off at the end - and representation - attempting to depict reality. (5) A disrespect for, and a wish to cross, traditional artistic boundaries such as those between popular and high culture and between different artistic forms. (6) A lessened belief in the importance of the author as the creator of the text.

Postmodernism is often opposed to modernism. However, the two movements share many of the features listed above and they are probably both best seen as artistic avant-gardes which have to separate themselves off from conventional artistic practice only to become conventional themselves in time.

Stream-of-consciousness

Stream-of-consciousness is a technique used by novelists to represent a character's thoughts and sense impressions without syntax or logical sequence: "The phrase 'stream-of-consciousness' was first used by William James in his *Principles Of Psychology* (1890) to describe the random flux of conscious and sub-conscious thoughts and impressions in the mind. But stream-of-consciousness becomes important as a technique with the rise of modernism in the 20th century."⁵² It can be seen in the works of James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner. In critical terms, stream-of-consciousness writing challenged the approaches of students and critics alike and so contributed to the development later in the century of new approaches to literature and textual reading.

Stream-of-consciousness was the most interesting of the "Western" influences to Chinese writers and readers in post-Mao era. Although writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce were not widely known or read, a few Chinese writers experimented with stream-of-consciousness in their work. By the summer of 1980, the name of Wang Meng had become most closely associated with these experiments. *Eye of the Night* (1979) shows only the beginnings of Wang's tendency in this direction. *The Sound of Spring* (1980) and *Dream of the Sea* (1980) are more representative. Although Wang Meng denied a conscious effort to

imitate Western stream-of-consciousness (arguing that Chinese literature had many adequate precedents) he was nonetheless widely championed among the young precisely for his exploration of Western technique.

Organization

This thesis focuses on an analysis of Wang Meng's major literary works from the early 1950s to the 1990s in the context of historical background, textual development and method of interpretation. The thesis provides a focused textual analysis of a number of Wang Meng's stories that emerged in the broad context of contemporary Chinese literature. It aims to decode a selection of Wang Meng's major representative works published between the 1950s and the 1990s, and attempts to interpret the characteristics of Wang Meng's writing at different stages. By doing so, the thesis attempts to enrich and develop the established western theories referred to above by means of an analytical rereading of the selected texts.

The thesis consists of five chapters, with an introduction and conclusion. The introduction provides some preliminary remarks and outlines some general but fundamental issues, as well as a brief note on Wang Meng's life. It also states why this research project, focuses on Wang Meng, among so many Chinese contemporary writers, as the case to study.

The main body of the thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter One gives an overview of the development of fictional writing in China, in accordance with major changes in society. The first part of the chapter comprises a presentation, in chronological order, of key Chinese writers and literary trends during the twentieth century, with an emphasis on

recent decades. Aspects such as theme, plot, writing style, narrative skills, etc. are discussed. The second part of this chapter focuses on reviewing Wang Meng's main writings from the 1950s to the late 1980s, to locate Wang Meng's place in China's literary world, and to compare Wang Meng, to some extent, with other major contemporary writers in China.

Chapter Two mainly examines Wang Meng's early works, in particular, his well-known but controversial short story *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department*, which is taken as examples of Wang Meng's application of Socialist Realist theory to his fictional writing. It argues that Wang Meng does not misrepresent the Party organization in a typical situation. He presents all that happens with reality and accuracy. The characters in his stories are the sorts that induce the reader to reflect deeply. The chapter affirms that *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department* is a moving story not only because it has artistic appeal as a short piece of fiction, but also because it would have made the contemporary Chinese readers think about many issues relating to the social and political situation in China.

Chapter Three mainly attempts to evaluate the narrative technique in Wang Meng's stories, with reference to his six experimental works *Eyes of the Night*, *The Voices of Spring*, *Kite Streamers*, *Dream of the Sea*, *Bolshevik Salute* and *The Butterfly* in the context of modern Chinese literature. An analysis is made of the narrative features of these six pieces to strengthen the claim that Wang Meng is one of the chief post-Mao writers in Chinese literature to pay utmost attention to literary technique as a means to break away from the traditional politicised formula of writing.

Chapter Four examines a key innovation in the Chinese literature of the 1980s—the influence of Western stream-of-consciousness—and how the approach was used by Wang Meng in his fiction, with detailed

reference to his two short stories: *Eyes of the Night* and *Dream of the Sea*. The stream-of-consciousness “movement” initiated by Wang Meng in post-Mao China proved to later writers that the inner life of individuals is well worth exploring, and that stream-of-consciousness techniques can achieve what more traditional approaches cannot.

Chapter Five makes a close reading of Wang Meng’s *Bolshevik Salute*, which revolves around a common basic plot—the quest for the self as an individual entity with a degree of coherence and intelligibility. The primary interest of this chapter is to see how the individual self is portrayed, fashioned, and literally and verbally constructed, in the narrative text.

The final part of this study gives some concluding remarks to the whole thesis.

Notes

- ¹ This statement is draw from the following sources: *Literature of the People's Republic of China* by Kai-Yu Hsu (1980); *After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society 1978-1981* (Ed.) by Jeffrey C. Kinkley (1985); *Morning Sun—Interviews with Chinese Writers of the Lost Generation* by Laifong Leung (1994); *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century* by Bonnie S. McDougall and Kam Louie (1997) and *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century* (Ed.) by Pang-Yuan Chi and David Der-Wei Wang (2000)
- ² For basic biographic facts, see *Biographic Dictionary of Chinese Writers*, 1982, pp.74-75; Wang Meng, *Literature and I – in reply to a letter from Comrade xx*, editor of Huacheng, Huacheng 1983, pp. 129-133; Wang Meng, *I am Wang Meng* , Tuanjie Publishing House, Beijing, 1996
- ³ Nanpi (南皮县) County is situated in the south-eastern part of Hebei Province (河北省).
- ⁴ Shatan (沙滩) an area of Beijing, and it is very close to the office building of the Ministry of Culture and the China National Art Gallery.
- ⁵ “July 7th Incident” here means: On July 7th, 1937, the Japanese Kwantung Army (关东军) began its war to conquer China. It is also known as the "Marco Polo Bridge Incident". On that day Japanese troops illegally occupied a railway junction near Wanping and fighting erupted. This is considered by many to be the date when the war between China and Japan began.
- ⁶ Wang Meng, *Autobiographical Note*, p. 372
- ⁷ Cangzhou (沧州) is a city in the south-eastern part of Hebei Province.
- ⁸ Xiangshan (香山) is situated in the north-west of Beijing. It is a well-known tourist spot in China, especially for its red leaves in the autumn months.
- ⁹ Earth King Temple is a place name in Beijing.
- ¹⁰ Wang Meng, *Autobiographical Note* in *Selected Works of Wang Meng*, p. 370
- ¹¹ *On Coalition Government*, (论联合政府) *An Outline History of Social Development*, (社会发展简史) *Philosophy for the Masses*, (大众哲学) *The White-Haired Girl*, (白毛女) *The Rhymes of Li Youcai*, (李有才板话) *The Iron Stream*. (铁流滚滚 by Russian writer A.S. Serafimovich 1863 – 1949)
- ¹² 夏冠洲: *用笔思考的作家*, p.26
- ¹³ For precise publication details data, refer to Sylvia Chan, *The Image of a “Capitalist Roader”: Some Dissident Short Stories in the Hundred Flowers Period*, Australia Journal of Chinese Affairs 1979, 2, p.100
- ¹⁴ This is the title under which the story was published. The original title for the story, according to Wang Meng, was *Zuzhibu laile ge nianqingren*, which is

the title of the story included in *Wang Meng xiaoshuo baogao wenxue xuan* [Selected Fiction and Reportage by Wang Meng], a collection of Wang Meng's writings which appeared in 1981. For an English translation of the story refer to Nie Hualing, ed., *Literature of the Hundred Flowers* 1981

- ¹⁵ The Hundred Flowers Campaign is an extraordinary moment in the history of China. "In the arts 'let a hundred flowers bloom,' and in scholarship 'let a hundred schools of thought contend,'" exclaimed Chairman Mao in April 1956. What followed was a remarkable year for China. During the Hundred Flowers period from mid-1956 to mid-1957, Chinese intellectuals basked in a new atmosphere of better treatment, greater latitude in which to work, and relaxed pressure in terms of the ideological orthodoxy. In the final phase of the period they were encouraged to speak out in criticism of the errors of Party cadres. An unexpected outburst of bitter grievances against the Communists in May 1957, particularly on university campuses, was then followed by a total reversal of the Hundred Flowers policies toward intellectuals.
- ¹⁶ <<组织部来了个年轻人>>这部小说在“反右”运动中引起了轩然大波，报刊上发表的文章连篇累牍。虽然毛泽东主席多次亲自出面过问保护，王蒙未能幸免于难。被错划为右派。“这篇小说推出了王蒙也毁灭了王蒙”参见 <<王蒙文集>>第四卷卷首作者说明和夏冠洲：《用笔思考的作家》p.29
- ¹⁷ This remark is based on Wang Meng's own information, *Literature and I* p.130
- ¹⁸ 王安 王蒙与崔瑞芳，中国社会出版社，北京，p.24
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p.26
- ²⁰ These information is come from the book: 王蒙与崔瑞芳，pp.21-26
- ²¹ Wang Meng, *Autobiographical Note*, p. 374
- ²² Ibid., p. 375
- ²³ The events of 1976 mainly refer to two important incidents in China; the first is the death of Mao, and the second is the crackdown on the Gang of Four.
- ²⁴ Bailey, Alison, China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong in *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing*, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 87
- ²⁵ Wendy Larson, *Introduction* in *Bolshevik Salute*, trans. with intro. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1989.
- ²⁶ Zhu Hong, *Introduction* in *The Stubborn Porridge and Other Stories*, George Braziller, New York, 1994
- ²⁷ *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 7 p.154
- ²⁸ Ibid., p.686
- ²⁹ Zhu Hong, *Introduction* in *The Stubborn Porridge and Other Stories*
- ³⁰ 汪昊，王蒙小说言论，花山文艺出版社，1998, p. 178

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- 31 Zhu Hong, p.3
- 32 ***The Chinese Western***, trans.with intro. By Zhu Hong, Ballantine, New York, 1991, p. 140
- 33 汪昊, p. 112
- 34 Zhu Hong, p.3
- 35 In Wang Meng's another story ***Winter Topic*** (冬天的话题), husband and wife debated on whether it was good or not to take bath at night or to take a shower in the morning.
- 36 Ibid., p.4
- 37 Ibid., p.4
- 38 夏冠洲, p.2
- 39 New York Times, 20 November 1991, A4
- 40 Zhu Hong, p. 6
- 41 王蒙自五十年代以来, 出版小说, 评论, 散文, 新旧体诗歌, 杂文作品共一千余万字。被翻译成英, 法, 德, 俄, 日, 韩, 意, 西班牙, 匈牙利, 斯洛伐克, 塞尔维亚, 荷兰, 瑞典, 挪威, 罗马尼亚, 保加利亚, 阿拉伯, 越南, 希伯来, 维吾尔, 哈萨克等二十余种语言文字, 并在相应国家或地区出版。作品多次在国内外获奖, 并曾获意大利蒙德罗文学奖, 日本创价学会和平与文化奖。
- 42 王蒙在国内外文学艺术界和学术界声名卓著, 现任解放军艺术学院, 南京大学, 浙江大学, 上海师范大学, 华中师范大学, 新疆大学, 新疆师范学院, 中国海洋大学, 安徽师范大学教授, 名誉教授, 顾问与中国海洋大学文学院院长。曾应邀访问世界各大洲四十多个国家。曾任哈佛大学燕京学院特邀访问学者, 美国三一学院校长级学者 (presidential fellow), 并以特邀嘉宾的身份参加国际笔会与世界出版工作者协会代表大会。为约旦作协名誉会员。
- 43 Those stories are ***A Simple Triptych*** and ***Octagon*** by Francis Pound; ***Fable*** by Jennifer Compton ***Snow White*** and ***Gift Horse*** by Iain Sharp; ***Between Earth and Sky*** by Patricia Grace and ***Swans*** by Janet Frame
- 44 Wang Meng, ***I am Wang Meng***, Tuanjie Publishing House, Beijing, 1996
- 45 Wayne C. Booth, ***The Rhetoric of Fiction***, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961, p. 164
- 46 Refer to the definition of Realism in The Columbia Encyclopaedia, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004
- 47 Zhou Yang, "***Mao Zedong's Teachings and Contemporary Art***", People's China, 16 Sept.1951, p.7
- 48 Maria Galikowski, ***Art and Politics in China***, p. 37

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- ⁴⁹ The reference sources for this paragraph mainly from: The Columbia Encyclopaedia(2004); The Macmillan Encyclopaedia(2004); Crystal Reference Encyclopaedia(2004) and Maria Galikowski's book *Art and Politics in China* (1998)
- ⁵⁰ J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Oxford [England]; Cambridge, MA, USA: Blackwell Reference, 3rd ed. 1991
- ⁵¹ It is valid to point out certain places and periods where and when modernist tendencies were at their most active and fruitful. For example, in France from the 1890s until the 1940s; in Russia during the pre-Revolutionary years and the 1920s; in Germany from the 1890s and on during the 1920s; in England from early in the 20th century and during the 1920s and 1930s; in America from shortly before the First World War and on during the inter-war period. Thus, it was a European and transcontinental movement, and its principal centres of activity were the capital cities.
- ⁵² *The Columbia Encyclopaedia*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004

Chapter One

Fiction: A Challenge to Chinese Contemporary Literature

每个人最后只能做他自己所能做的事情，我能做的是
写小说。．．．．． 我追求故事的诗意和庄严。

--- 王 蒙

**An individual can only do what he can do, what I can do
is write stories. . . . I seek poetry and solemnity in my stories.**

---- Wang Meng

Chinese has arguably the oldest and richest literary tradition in the world, and yet fiction as a form, by virtue of its easy creation and quick publication, by its modern theme and fresh style, preferred by Chinese writers only from the 1920s.

Bonnie McDougall and Kam Louie pointed out in their book: "In traditional Chinese society, the writing and reading of fiction were regarded by scholars as frivolous occupations, and not deemed part of literature proper."¹ As its Chinese name, 'small talk' (Xiaoshuo, 小说), implies, fiction had since very early times been thought of as idle chitchat. Attitudes towards fiction changed dramatically in the early twentieth century mainly due to Liang Quchao (梁启超 1873 - 1929)², who was influenced by the Japanese debate on the political novel at the end of the nineteenth century.

A striking feature of modern Chinese fiction is the predominance of the theme of social injustice. Mostly written in classical Chinese, novels of this kind were published in prominent journals such as Short Story Monthly (xiaoshuo yuebao 小说月报). The proliferation of literary journals during the 1920s further popularised the shorter form: stories had a better chance of acceptance if they could be printed or serialised over a few issues. Popular fiction on modern themes continued to be published in urban centres throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

Fiction during the first years after the founding of the People's Republic of China depicted the great social changes and transformations then taking place. China's Communist Party leaders advocated Socialist Realism as the guiding theory for all literary endeavours; it was marked by strict adherence to Party doctrine and by a narrow emphasis on the credible depiction of external reality; it inhibited writers' creativity and led to stagnation.

The Hundred Flowers Campaign encouraged writers and other intellectuals to voice criticisms of Party policy. Those who did so were soon punished during the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign, when they were denounced and either imprisoned or sent to labour reform camps. Many, including Wang Meng himself, were to remain confined for over two decades. Even harsher was the 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution, during which thousands of intellectuals were sent to work on distant farms. Some writers, such as Lao She, were either murdered or committed suicide.

Following Mao Zedong's death in 1976 and Deng Xiaoping's consolidation of power in 1979, strictures on literary freedom were relaxed. The first stories from this period relate the nightmarish experiences of the Cultural Revolution-the "literature of the wounded" (伤痕文学). Despite a crackdown on "bourgeois liberalism" (资产阶级自由化) and "spiritual pollution," (精神污染) writing continued to flourish in the 1980s. Many works struggled with general social issues, such as official corruption and overcrowding; feminist issues were treated in novels by women writers such as Zhang Jie and Wang Anyi. Reportage literature, a hybrid of journalism and fiction, grew in popularity. Novelists experimented with stream of consciousness and other narrative techniques, while the Misty School of poets, exemplified by Bei Dao and Gu Cheng, developed a fusion of various modernist styles.

Han Shaogong, Ah Cheng, and others developed a "seeking roots" literature, characterized by rural settings, geographical and botanical descriptions, and the incorporation of local dialects and folklore. Zhang Xianliang and Can Xue were prominent among the regional writers who emerged, most notably from China's far west and south. After the crackdown of student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square (June 4, 1989), several writers fled China, fearing government reprisals for their support of the democracy movement. Those who stayed behind, however, continued to make important contributions to the development of fictional writing.

The rest of this chapter presents an outline of key literary trends and major fictional writers, who worked contemporaneously with Wang Meng in the second half of the twentieth century. The chapter also provides an overview of Wang Meng's position, (partly vis-à-vis his well-know contemporaries) on China's modern literary scene.

An Overview of Literary Trends and Writers in China in the Twentieth Century

Alison Bailey³ in her recent contribution article to *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing* pointed out: “Traditional culture has proved at once a source of pride and a burden for modern Chinese writers, who have been trying to come to terms with it since the middle of the nineteenth century. Fiction, in particular, has always been at the centre of bids for modernization.”⁴ Back in 1902 Liang Qichao, an influential Chinese reformer, exclaimed: “If you want to revitalize a country’s populace, you must first revitalize that country’s fiction.”⁵ Subsequently, the connection between fiction and national salvation, supported by traditional close ties to government, became increasingly explicit.

Vernacular fiction, formerly despised as a “popular” genre, became the dominant genre of the twentieth century. Believed by reformers to embody and convey the dynamism of modern societies in the West and Japan, it was perceived as the medium through which mass education and the inculcation of modern ideas were to be achieved. Writers took it on themselves to be China’s saviours, and this preoccupation has dominated literary discourse throughout the century.

The New Culture, or May Fourth, Movement⁶ (1919) challenged orthodoxy in radical ways and has shaped social and cultural discourse ever since. With ‘Science’ and ‘Democracy’ as their keywords, reformers promoted Westernization and attempted a total rejection of China’s cultural past. The classical language, for so many centuries the elite mode of expression, was replaced by a vernacular which eschewed the elegant, concise indirection of

its literary ancestor and was strongly influenced by Western syntax.⁷

The short story, an imported genre, became the dominant literary form, best able to convey the intensely lyrical subjectivity typical of May Fourth fiction. The first-person narrator appeared for the first time in vernacular fiction and autobiographical modes prevailed. Writers like Lu Xun were fired with the desire to expose China's problems and employed a form of 'critical realism' with which to do it.⁸

By the 1930s and 1940s Chinese writers had become increasingly left-leaning and the lyrical short story was largely superseded by satirical works and by long novels with rural settings that espoused collective rather than individualist values. Satire soon declined in influence, however, because it was considered unpatriotic and too negative. Left-wing writers began to emulate Soviet-style Socialist Realism, whose aim was not simply to reflect reality but to shape it, through the promotion of a particular Marxist ideology. This, "with certain variations, was to become the predominant fictional form in China until after Mao Zedong's death in 1976."⁹

In 1942 Chairman Mao Zedong summoned writers and artists at Yan'an to a conference to reaffirm Party authority over all spheres of life in the Communist-held base areas and laid down prescriptive rules circumscribing Chinese literature for the next forty years. Literature's primary function was to be political: aesthetic and entertainment values were largely suppressed. The writer's audience was to be "the workers, peasants, and soldiers" (工, 农, 兵), to whom his or her work must be easily comprehensible, promoting the party spirit and reflecting the 'real life' of the people. This last point meant depicting a bright,

idealistic future, little if any psychological probing, and increasing numbers of exemplary protagonists of the right class background. Bourgeois individualism, critical realism, and satire were to be avoided, as were Westernized styles: ‘national forms’ based on oral literature and folk-songs were to be adopted. The palatable, if simplistic, agitprop works of the peasant writer Zhao Shuli¹⁰ (赵树理) became the epitome of the Maoist ideal.

Born in Qinshui, Shanxi Province, Zhao Shuli is one of the most accomplished writers from the Chinese rural interior. His early fictional pieces were about peasant life and the anti-Japanese war effort. After moving to Communist headquarters in Yan’an in the early 1940s, he polished his skills as a storyteller, and strongly supported the popularisation of art and literature among the peasantry. Two of his most famous works, “*The Marriage of Young Blacky*” (Xiao Erhei jiehun 小二黑结婚) and “*Rhymes of Li Youcai*” (Li Youcai banhua 李有才板话), were published in 1943, followed by a play script. When Wang Meng was a teenage boy, he longed to read literary works of the revolution. Zhao Shuli’s *Rhymes of Li Youcai* was one of the books on Wang Meng’s reading list. Wang’s fictional language, it can be argued, was to some extent, influenced by Zhao’s story telling style. Zhao’s literary output was praised by the Communist leadership for its success in describing the peasants’ struggle in a sympathetic and lively manner, using traditional story-telling techniques and incorporating the Communist party’s political line. Well into the 1950s Zhao was regarded as a model writer.¹¹

After 1949 writers in China came under increasing and eventually overwhelming Party control. A massive bureaucracy was set up which led campaigns, initiated and dominated literary debates, and co-opted large numbers of writers through a system of providing salaries, housing, privileges, and status. Many younger

writers were committed to the ideals of the Party, and were willingly enlisted.

A mounting number of campaigns aimed at ensuring conformity of thought, and alternating positive and negative views of the role of intellectuals, meant, however, that this ‘golden age’ was short-lived.¹² The number of new titles published after 1949 went down drastically. Even so, the massive purges of the Anti-Rightists’ campaign of 1957 – 1958 took many by surprise. Approximately half a million people, including a large number of writers, were labelled as Rightists and sent to prison, to labour camps, or into internal exile, some, like Wang Meng, Liu Binyan and Zhang Xianliang, for over twenty years. Many ex-rightists, rehabilitated in the late 1970s, were later to play an important role in the development of contemporary Chinese fiction.

In the mid-1960s ideological splits disguised as literary debates heralded the Cultural Revolution (1966 –1976), a mass campaign initiated by Mao in order to seize power from less hard-line opponents. It tore the country apart. Enormous numbers of people underwent ‘criticism and struggle’ sessions, many involving brutal treatment. Families and colleagues denounced and betrayed each other. Enforced separations, imprisonment, and suicides were all too common. Urban intellectuals and cadres were sent to the countryside to ‘learn from the peasants’, leading lives there of hardship and uncertainty. Leading cultural and political figures were beaten, imprisoned, and killed. These traumatic events still reverberate today and had profound implications for the literature of the succeeding decades.

Eventually factional violence was perceived to be out of hand and the People’s Liberation Army (人民解放军) intervened. The Party restored order by sending rebellious urban youth into

long-term exile in the countryside. The mixed experiences of this generation became the subject-matter of a large number of works after the Cultural Revolution was over and they had returned home. Many of the most important contemporary writers in China are former Red Guards (红卫兵).

Literature suffered badly during the *Cultural Revolution*. Only one major novelist emerged, Hao Ran¹³ (浩然), a writer whose first major work, the three-volume novel “*Bright Sunny Skies*”¹⁴ (Yanyang tian 艳阳天) carefully reflects prevailing policy but whose occasionally stirring prose, with its strong debt to traditional fiction, could not prevent his work joining him in obscurity when his Party backers fell in 1976. Wang Meng once tried to follow in Hao Ran’s footsteps by writing a similar kind of story. In 1975, Wang Meng dedicated almost a whole year to writing a novel called *The Scenery* (Zhebian fengjing 这边风景), which was based on the country life of the northern part of Xinjiang. Although Wang Meng tried his best to revise and amend his draft several times, the piece did not meet publishing requirements at that time. The novel was rejected outright by the China Youth Publishing House a few months before the fall of the “gang of four”. This novel was one of only a few literary failures on the part of Wang Meng during the lengthy span of his writing career.¹⁵

As one scholar has commented about this tumultuous period, “Literature was absolute in its moral certainty: no ambiguity or irony was allowed. Certain classics and translations of modern Leftist writers abroad were available to a privileged few, including many young people amongst whom they circulated illicitly. Some underground works and literary writings were hand-copied and passed around in the later years of the Cultural Revolution, but the works of Mao formed the dominant canon.”¹⁶

A new period of comparative freedom of expression began after Mao's death, as the Maoists and the more reform-minded faction headed by Deng Xiaoping fought for power. The keynote for the new literature was struck with the publication of "*The Class Teacher*" (*Banzhuren* 班主任), a short story by a young writer, Liu Xinwu (刘心武), in *People's Literature* in November 1977, its condemnation of the educational and cultural policies of the previous decade complemented by its praise for intellectuals. This story, though indifferently written, was an event of major significance, representing as it did the first sign of a political thaw, or a turning point of free expression, at least in literary and cultural circles.

The new trend spawned by Liu Xinwu's short story, "Scar literature," or, "wounded literature" as some Western scholars prefer, (*Shanghen wenxue* 伤痕文学) is often regarded as the first expression of a relaxation in China's literary circles after the *Culture Revolution* and the death of Mao.¹⁷ It started in 1978 with the publication in the Shanghai newspaper, *Wenhui Bao* (文汇报), of "*The Scar*" (*Shanghen* 伤痕) by a young writer Lu Xinhua. It comprises a tearful account of family tragedy during the Cultural Revolution. The short story set off waves of writing about the atrocities of the ten-year turmoil in China. By invoking the physical scar as a testament of the Cultural Revolution, writers of "scar" literature describe a body politic through which the past can be remembered and suppressed memory restored. A number of Wang Meng's early short stories soon after his initial re-emergence as a writer, such as, *The Most Precious* (1978), reveal strong "scar literature" tendencies, and Wang's sympathy for the kinds of ideas and sentiments other "scar" writers were trying to convey. The story condemns in sharp words and righteous tones the inhuman acts committed during the ten-year course of the Cultural

Revolution by certain people who betrayed their friends and sacrificed others to save themselves.¹⁸

As Bailey points out in her article: “. . . *wounded literature*’ is characterized by its rhetorical excess and its themes of the exposure of suffering and resolution, as well as by its remarkable uniformity. Mostly written by members of the generation of millions of young people who had been ‘rusticated’ and were now returning in force to the cities, it provided a sanctioned form of catharsis, for writers and readers alike.”¹⁹

“*Scar*” literature focused on the traumatic experiences of the Cultural Revolution in terms of unrelieved darkness. Prior to 1982, much of it dealt with persecution, corrupt cadres, honest peasants, hard work and no pleasure, rape, suicide, and hopelessness. There was at first little questioning or apportioning of blame, except for Jiang Qing who was Mao’s wife and cohort, although over time, Mao’s initially sacrosanct role was increasingly undermined. The prescribed positive endings to the stories give ground for hope, thanks to Party support and the protagonists’ desire to serve the New China.

Shortly after this first wave of exploratory literature came a further re-evaluation, with several writers feeling the need to show that life in the countryside had not necessarily been one of unrelieved hardship and that not everyone had been a victim: many had volunteered to go and felt their experience had been valuable. Shi Tiesheng’s (史铁生) nostalgic idyll “*My Faraway Qingpingwan*” (*Wo yaoyuande Qingpingwan* 我的遥远的清平湾), which was published in 1983, and Ah Cheng’s (阿城) “*The Chess King*” (*Qi wang* 棋王 published in 1984), are good examples of this tendency.

Told in the first person, “*My Faraway Qingpingwan*” looks back at the narrator’s time in northern Shaanxi as an educated youth. His duty is to tend the water buffalo under the guidance of Bai, a kind old man who likes to sing the local folksongs. At the end of the story the narrator is in hospital in Beijing, paralysed from the waist down. Although he has no intention of leaving the capital, he recalls with affection the simple and natural world he left behind, its harsh beauty and the strengths and kindness of its impoverished inhabitants. Two lines from the story (‘it was a scene that made me forget the times I lived in and reflect in silence on mankind’s long and remote history. It seemed to me that this was exactly how we had walked through the centuries’),²⁰ and the verses sung by Bai inspired scenes in Chen Kaige’s 1984 film *The Yellow Earth* (Huang tudi 黄土地).²¹

The works of Ah Cheng represented a literary breakthrough. Ah Cheng was sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. There, he seems to have been an inveterate story-teller, swapping stories for food, a major preoccupation in his work. In 1984 he was persuaded to publish his most famous story, *The Chess King*, which was followed closely in 1985 by two more stories in the same series, *Haizi Wang* (孩子王 *King of the Children*) and *Shu Wang* (树王 *King of the Tree*). Like many of his contemporaries, Ah Cheng writes about the life of urban youth in exile in the countryside. Where he differs from them is in his adept handling of philosophical themes, particularly Daoism and Confucianism, and his adaptation of traditional language to modern circumstances. His work is free of the didacticism so typical of post -1949 literatures. This, along with his lack of bitterness, and his refreshing humour (thin on the ground in contemporary Chinese literature), has made him very popular with a large readership outside China.

“The Chess King” is based on the life of a group of educated youth in south-west China. The narrator at first feels superior to one of the individuals in the group, Wang Yisheng, who is from a poor family, but he comes to respect his simplicity and talent. Wang has two obsessions: chess and food. The group eke out their meagre grain rations with mice, snakes and wild herbs, cooking and sharing their food in friendship, laughter and good fun. While eating takes care of physical existence, chess provides the spiritual dimension, with Wang Yisheng’s mentor, an elderly garbage collector, teaching him the secrets of chess in language borrowed from Daoism. The climax comes when Wang participates in a chess championship. He takes on nine finalists at the same time by playing all nine games at once; eight are defeated outright, and the mysterious ninth player is forced to come out of seclusion and beg for a draw. He turns out to be an elderly man who addresses Wang Yisheng in classical Chinese. It has been commented that, “The description of the championship and its aftermath is one of the finest passages in contemporary literature.”²²

The years of 1978 – 1979 marked the Democracy Movement, largely initiated by disillusioned ex-Red guards. One of the most notable publications to surface during this time was *Today* (*Jintian* 今天), which was produced by members of the cultural underground, under the editorship of the exiled poet Bei Dao (北島). The journal published fiction and poetry by writers destined to become internationally renowned. *Today* argued that the demand of politics on literature in the past half-century “constitutes a strangle-hold on literature.”²³ Accordingly, literature must be totally separated from politics. Out of this utter disgust with political ideology, contributors to the journal adopted the position that literature should, above all, depict the “uniqueness of the human individual.”²⁴

The Today writers had a profound impact on Chinese writing. Bei Dao and others wrote fiction which was highly innovative and experimental, but it was their poetry which was to break the mould and undermine the all-pervasive Maoist discourse. The ‘misty’ or ‘Obscure’ poetry (*menglong shi* 朦胧诗) of individuals such as Bei Dao, Gu Cheng (顾城), and Shu Ting (舒婷) was highly disturbing to orthodox critics because it broke with the ‘realist’ mode they wrongly considered as the tradition in China and turned instead to private symbolism and to Western modernist models.

Also significant was the renewed emphasis on the self in this poetry and fiction. Maoism had given priority to the community over the self and individualism became associated with bourgeois behaviour. In the wake of the massive disillusionment and loss of ideals after the Cultural Revolution, however, a new ‘I’ emerged, or the ‘self as hero’. The late 1970s also saw the return of the Rightists to the fold: tens of thousands were finally released from labour camps or allowed to return from exile in the hinterlands. “A number of previously silenced writers began writing again, focusing on the ideals of the ‘golden age’, on their experiences and feelings when denied by the Party, and their tentative joy at being re-accepted.”²⁵ In general, the fiction of these ex-Rightists displays a remarkable level of loyalty to the Party in its reformed state and great optimism for China’s future.

Major ex-Rightist writers include Wang Meng himself and also Zhang Xianliang (张贤亮), both of whom have achieved international recognition. Zhang Xianliang’s prison-camp novels, especially his “*Half of Man is Woman*” (*Nanrende yiban shi nuren* 男人的一半是女人, published in 1985) caused a tremendous stir in mainland China. The story begins in a labour camp in 1967. Every night the prisoners talk about sex, swapping

stories of dreams where they copulate with ghosts, as their sole diversion from the bleak surroundings. Zhang Yonglin comes across a woman prisoner bathing in a creek, getting a clear view of her naked body. She also sees him but lets him continue to gaze at her. Eight years later, Zhang Yonglin is released and works in a state farm herding goats. The Party Secretary, Gao Xueyi, arranges for this same woman, Huang Xiangjiu, to come and help him. They marry, but on their wedding night he finds that years of denial have made him impotent. He wants a divorce, but she refuses. Discovering later that she is having an affair with Cao Xueyi, he buries himself in Western and Chinese philosophy in frustration and bitterness. A flood at the farm enables Zhang Yonglin to become a hero, and Huang Xiangjiu is especially attentive to him that night: finally he achieves an erection, and from being 'half a man' becomes 'whole'. Having regained his potency, he treats Huang Xiangjiu with open contempt but she responds with renewed tenderness and affection.

The narrator is profoundly ambivalent in his attitude towards women, who seem to represent a China alternately yearned for and rejected or rejecting. Forming a series, and semi-autobiographical in nature, the prison-camp novels focus on the ruminations of an intellectual Rightist narrator named Zhang during and after his twenty years of hard labour. Of the novels, it has been observed that it is the controversial nature of the subject-matter, combining details of the Chinese gulag with episodes of lust and impotence to allegorise the plight of the Chinese intellectual, which has brought Zhang Xianliang so much attention.²⁶

A much underrated but far better account of an intellectual's virtual captivity during the Cultural Revolution is Yang Jiang's (杨绛) *Six Chapters from a Cadre School* (*Ganxiao*

Liuji, 干校六记), published in 1981), rendered cerebral reflections on the social and moral responsibilities shared by all Chinese for what had happened to them during the Cultural Revolution. Yang Jiang's work is subtle in its play of memories and of repetition. Deliberately understated in its detailing of fruitless hard labour and painful partings, Yang's spare and classically concise prose is a highly effective medium for exposing the absurd and terrible ironies of that time.

The early 1980s saw a comparative easing of literary restrictions in China, although successive campaigns against writers and against modernist experimentation ensured a certain degree of conformity. Many writers, such as Jiang Zilong (蒋子龙) and Gao Xiaosheng (高晓声), were engaged in 'reform literature', (改革文学) extolling the merits of modernization and the gradual dismantling of central control in industry and agriculture.

Jiang Zilong's native hometown, like Wang Meng, is also in the Canzhou Prefecture of Hebei Province. Jiang joined the Chinese Army in the 1960s, and in 1965 while he was still serving in the army, he published his first short story. He became a worker in one of the largest factories in the famous industrial city of Tianjing soon after he left the army. In 1979, his well-known story *Manager Qiao Assumes Office* (*Qiao Changzhang Shangren ji* 乔厂长上任记) was published in People's Literature. Since Jiang served as factory worker, secretary to the factory director, and director of one of the factory's workshops, his factory stories are vivid reflections of all the experiences he gained, of the thoughts and mood of Chinese urbanites—their eager demands to end social chaos and their desperate longing for a "normal" daily life during the early stages of reform in the cities in China.

The “political” past of Gao Xiaosheng is very similar to Wang Meng’s. Because of a “manifesto” he wrote with a group of friends associated with a new literary journal, he was branded a “Rightist” in 1958 and sent down to the countryside in Jiangsu Province (江苏省) for more than twenty years. He did not resume writing until 1979. As most critics have pointed out, this prolonged experience living with the peasants forged a characteristically “peasant style” in his fiction which, in its vivid rusticity, is comparable to that of Hao Ran, the reigning novelist during the Cultural Revolution, “although the ideological orientations of the two writers are markedly different.”²⁷ Gao’s style is also qualitatively different from Wang Meng’s stories. On the superficial level, Gao is a highly traditional realistic writer. His prose has little of Wang Meng’s fancy imagism and undulating lyricism. Nor does he pretend to write in the manner of “stream-of-consciousness.” Compared with Wang Meng’s “foreign-flavoured” syntax, Gao Xiaosheng’s language is exclusively rooted in his native soil: its vividness is inseparable from the earthiness of the peasant milieu he describes in almost all of his stories. Yet, Gao is a more accomplished stylist; his seemingly simple and transparent language has the oral cadence of a Chinese folk epic.

The best illustration of Gao Xiaosheng’s style is provided by his most accomplished work, “*Li Shunda Builds a House*” (*Li Shunda Zaowu* 李顺大造屋), which was published in 1979. The story is told in a traditional manner by an implied oral storyteller. The interesting point about this simple story is that within its realistic frame are contained other layers of meaning. Li Shunda’s thwarted attempts at building his house may be seen as an embryonic myth of Sisyphus, Chinese style--of forever striving and failing in a seemingly unending process. While Sisyphus’s fate is cosmically determined, Li Shunda’s is the consequence of constantly changing Party policies. The characterization of Li

Shunda has not only the rustic humanity of an individual peasant but also the political mentality of a “true follower.” As Gao Xiaosheng himself explains, for thousands of years Chinese peasants have been true followers. They have been searching for an object of faith, first in divinities and emperor; then they found it in the Chinese Communist Party, which they worshiped like an idol. “It is not easy to find an object of worship,” Cao said: “once it is established it is hard to shake it. Accordingly, even when the Party practiced wrong lines of policy, (the peasants) likewise worshipped them.”²⁸

Although Gao Xiaosheng’s fiction, as he himself has said several times, is solidly grounded in the fabric of reality, Leo Ou-Fan Lee, a western scholar, once commented that: “the ‘fictional’ dimension in Gao’s work is “largely a product of artistic restructuring. Insofar as both form and content are united in an ironic vision, I have found the Li Shunda story a prime example of implied dissidence.”²⁹ In the same article, Lee also mentioned why he singled out the fiction of Wang Meng and Gao Xiaosheng for discussion in his article: “. . . for each has attempted, with varying degrees of successes, to evolve a language of his own in order to realize an individual fictional vision of contemporary Chinese reality.”³⁰

Other writers, compared with Zhang Xianliang and Gao Xiaosheng, were more critical or promoted the needs of special interest groups, particularly scientists and intellectuals. Zhang Jie (张洁) and Dai Houying (戴厚英) have been regarded as advocates for women, [particularly divorcees,] with Zhang’s novella “*The Ark*” (*Fangzhou* 方舟, published in 1981) and Dai’s novel “*Ah, Humanity*” (*Ren a, Ren* 人啊, 人, published in 1980).

In *The Ark*, Zhang Jie describes the lives of three women who refuse to rely on men to support them. In the 1920s Lu Xun claimed that China's Noras would either fall into prostitution, go back to their husband or starve, but Zhang Jie's modern women are educated and have employable skills. As single women living together, however, they are the targets of gossip and harassment. Cao Jinghua, a divorced woman, is a Party member and theoretician. During the Cultural Revolution, she is sent to a forestry area where she marries an uneducated timber-worker. She returns to Beijing, ill and alone, only to be attacked again because she has written an essay criticising aspects of the new era. However, she refuses to lose heart, and turns her skills to practical use by making all the furniture in the flat. Liu Quan is an interpreter who has also been divorced by her husband. Her beauty now makes her the target of unwelcome advances from her superiors at work, and she suffers from prolonged depression. The third member of the household, Liang Qian, is not divorced but has left her husband because of his hypocrisy. An assistant film director for over ten years, she is given her first opportunity to direct a film after the Cultural Revolution, but the film is banned because the main actress has breasts that are unacceptably large. The three women decide to continue to support each other in their struggle to live as normal people.

Zhang's work is technically accomplished and often satirical in nature. Along with the majority of 'reform' writers, she continued to write within accepted confines, although her work sat less easily with the authorities than that of some: "The overall effect of 'reform' literature was subtly, and often unconsciously, to assist in the process of delegitimizing party authority."³¹

Dai Houying, a young literature instructor in Shanghai published a controversial novel, *Ren a Ren* in 1980. The novel was rejected by several publishers before it was finally published in

Guangzhou. It immediately generated sharp controversy over the author's thesis that "Marxism and humanism are compatible." But Dai's fundamental claim in matters concerning literature itself is that realism is not the only method to arrive at artistic truth. In her view, "artistic truth is not the same as imitation of life's facts" and, "strictly speaking, the highest function of artistic creation does not lie in representing reality, but in truthfully and imaginatively expressing the perception, attitude, and feeling towards reality on the part of the artist-writer." Thus, she wishes to lay special emphasis on the "important meaning of the writer's subjective world"³² and welcomes the trends of Western modernism because she thinks that "the serious modernist artists are also seeking an artistic truth; they sense that the realistic method has constrained their search for truth, and therefore they embark upon reform in art."³³ Her own novel is, consequently, an experiment in human subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, as it is written from a number of points of view, and her "stream-of-consciousness" technique combines "the characters' feelings, fantasies, associations and dreams" because "in this way it is closer to the reality of their psychological states."³⁴

Dai's intellectual intentions deserve wide attention, for she has argued boldly against the omnipotence of realism as the creative method. Unfortunately, Dai Houying's lofty ambitions are not realised in her novel, due largely to the inadequacy of her fictional technique. Compared to Wang Meng, she is a novice writer. Her experiment in inter-subjectivity consists in having the story told respectively and sequentially by each of the main characters. And her dream sequences, which she claims contain "symbolic meaning," are very derivative. The centre-piece of the novel is a "dream" written by the heroine, in which a special disease suddenly takes hold of the city population and causes everyone to take out his or her heart.

The year 1985 was a key time in China, when a number of different trends emerged almost simultaneously, the effects of which are still being felt. These included the influential ‘Roots’ school of fiction, avant-grade experimentalism, and experiments in other forms such as oral literature.

‘Roots’ literature (寻根文学) has its basis in the desire of ‘rusticated youth’ to come to terms with their experiences and in an attempt to understand or redefine Chinese culture. Writers began looking for—and creating—a mythic or idealized ‘China’ through an exploration of past traditions, peasant life, local cultures, and marginal areas where, ironically, the majority Han Chinese culture is least dominant. Ironically, too, most ‘Roots’ writers are urban-based, so that “there is a distance, mental, geographical, and often temporal, between them and the worlds they describe.”³⁵

From 1985 on, ‘Roots’ literature became a major force in China. Its best-known writers include Jia Pingwa (贾平凹), with his accounts of peasant life and rural reform in remote Shangzhou³⁶ (商州), and Zhaxi Dawa (扎西达娃), a Tibetan writer, with his exotic *Tibetan Tales*. Rural or border area settings seem to have the effect of freeing writers from their inhibitions. Masculinity, violence, and male sexual prowess come to the fore, in far more explicit detail than ever before, while women (most ‘Roots’ writers seem to be men) remain symbols of ambivalence, to be treated with brutality or desired as sexual objects or mothers of sons. For example, the ‘Roots’-influenced Liu Heng’s novella *Early Morning Sunlight* (*Fuxi Fuxi* 伏羲伏羲 published in 1988) blends ancient Chinese myth with a claustrophobic account of sexual obsession, quasi-incest, and fathers’ desire for male heirs. Death inevitably follows sexual transgression, but the male

protagonist's bizarre death by drowning gives him an ironic immortality as his highly visible genitals pass into legend.

Liu Heng specialises in exploring the psychological states of people whose lives are distorted by events beyond their control. His most famous work, *Early Morning Sunlight*, is a study of lust and violence within a small rural family in the 1940s. Yang Jinshan, an elderly widow without an heir after thirty years of marriage, buys the young and beautiful Wang Judou. Despite his repeated attempts to make her pregnant, however, Wang Judou remains barren, and the frustrated Yang Jinshan abuses her sadistically. His nephew, Yang Tianqing, orphaned and adopted by his uncle, is only four years younger than Wang Judou and feels great sympathy for her. Tianqing and Judou, who are at the peak of physical well-being, soon plunge into a passionate affair, which they hide from the uncle, and when Judou gives birth to a son, Tianbai, Jinshan is overjoyed. After the old man falls down a cliff and becomes paralysed, Tianqing and Judou become more reckless and Jinshan realises what has been happening. He attempts to strangle Tianbai, but is caught by Tianqing and Judou, who then take turns in humiliating him. With Yang Jinshan paralysed, the lovers take elaborate precautions to prevent Judou from becoming pregnant again, but painful methods prescribed by a village sorceress cause their passion to fade. When Tianbai grows older and discovers the relationship between his mother and his 'cousin', he is furious. Tianqing drowns himself in a water-vat in shame, and Judou, who has, despite her and Tianqing's best efforts, fallen pregnant again, gives birth to a weakling. The Chinese title of this story indicates that this powerful tale of illicit love and incest can be read as a modern version of an ancient Chinese creation myth. Its sexual detail is unusually graphic, as in the image of Tianqing's penis dangling outside the vat. Zhang Yimou's³⁷ film of the story became a huge international success under the title *Judou*. (菊豆)

‘Roots’ literature contains a plethora of marginal figures imbued with symbolic complexity: mutes, primitives, idiots, the insane, the impotent, and the maimed. The work of Han Shaogong (韩少功), a former Red Guard and ‘rusticated youth’ is typical. His landscapes and people, although nominally rooted in the remote mountainous regions of Hunan and drawn from his vision of ancient *Chu Culture* (楚文化), seem to be allegorical in nature, posing questions about China and the Chinese character that go beyond regionalism. His most famous early stories, “*The Return*” (*Guiqulai* 归去来 published in 1985) and “*The Blue Bottle Cap*” (*Langaizi* 蓝盖子 also published in 1985), deal indirectly with the after-math of the Cultural Revolution. “*The Return*” describes the bewildering visit a young man makes to a remote village, where he is welcomed by villagers, certain he is someone else. Denying this at first, the narrator eventually seems to concede that he might once have been this other person, but the question of his identity is left uncertain. The story hinges on memory, alienation, and the loss of self, as the protagonist collaborates in the dislocation of his own identity and accepts almost unconcernedly his role in a murder.

Han’s most controversial works, “*Dad Dad Dad*” (*Ba Ba Ba* 爸爸爸爸 published in 1986) and “*Woman Woman Woman*” (*Nu Nu Nu* 女女女 published in 1986), deal explicitly, if allegorically, with the ‘fossilization of the Chinese race’. ‘*Dad Dad Dad*’ is set in an isolated mountain village apparently untouched by modern life and rife with superstition and cruelty: a microcosmic ‘China’. At the centre of the story is an idiot, Bing Zai, whose sole vocabulary consists of the words ‘Dad Dad’, which he aims at any man in sight, and ‘Fuck your mother’. Bing Zai becomes in turn the butt of the villagers’ cruelty, a sage, and a failed sacrifice. Around him the villagers fight battles with the neighbouring village and embark on an exodus after a mass self-

inflicted poisoning of the weaker members. Bing Zai survives, presumably as an indication that the whole stupid cycle of destruction and ignorance will continue. In '*Woman Woman Woman*' an old woman suffers a stroke and becomes tyrannical before evolving backwards into a monstrous, caged fish and dying in mysterious circumstances. The narrator, a devoted nephew, retreats into yearning for a life uncomplicated by anything except doing the washing-up.

The peasant-born 'Roots' writer Mo Yan (莫言) sets his stories and novels in rural Shandong Province (山东省). In the West, he is best known for his family saga "*Red Sorghum*" (*Honggaoliang jiazu* 红高粱家族 1986), which is a powerful and nostalgic record of recent Chinese history as it affects one family. It offers a glorious vision of heroes and brave women who dwell in a fabulous traditional world unlikely ever to have existed except in imagination. Life is often brutal but described in sensuous, epic detail.

"*Red Sorghum*" is widely regarded as Mo Yan's most famous work. The story is about the history of a family in the 1930s. It is related in the first person some forty years later. The narrator is the grandson of Yu Zhan'ao, a sedan-chair bearer turned bandit. Hired to take Dai Fenglian to her husband's place on her wedding day, Yu kills a robber along the way and excites Dai's attention. Dai's husband is an older man rumoured to have leprosy, and on arriving at his home she refuses to let him touch her. On the third day, she goes back to visit her own parents as is customary. On the way, when she and her father pass through the sorghum fields, she is raped by Yu Zhan'ao. When she returns to her husband's home, she finds both her husband and her father-in-law murdered. Yu moves in to live with her, and their sorghum wine becomes famous throughout the area after he urinates in it during

the fermentation process. Their son, Douguan, is born and grows into a brave boy. When the Japanese attack the village, Yu becomes a commander of the local militia. Both sides commit terrible atrocities, which are described in detail. For attempting to run away with the donkeys, for example, Uncle Arhat is skinned alive. Yu loses most of his men in a decisive battle when he is betrayed by another militia unit, and Dai is also shot dead. While the battle is won when the other militia arrives, bad blood is already sown among the Chinese fighters.

The novel is a mixture of many elements, with myths and legends intermingling with tales of grotesque cruelty. Its appeal to patriotism meshes neatly with current official policies, and its explicit descriptions also suit the current popular demand for sex and violence. Filmed by Zhang Yimou under the same title, it won several international awards and brought Mo Yan an international following. Rooted more in contemporary China is his “*Paradise County Garlic Song*” (*Tiantang suantai zhi ge* 天堂蒜台之歌 1988), which is based on an actual rural riot against excessive local taxes in 1987. Mo Yan’s work has been summed up thus: “Mo Yan’s often shockingly violent short stories deal with themes of impotence, obsession, and a limited redemption: rural life is not depicted nostalgically but imbued with a dark, sour aftertaste.”³⁸

Other tendencies appearing after 1985 include the urban ‘hippy’ or ‘Stray youth’ fiction of Liu Suola (刘索拉) and others, which many Chinese critics have condemned as nihilistic. Wang Shuo (王朔) continued the trend towards an uncommitted, cynical fiction that was enormously popular for a time with young readers.

Wang Shuo, a young Chinese writer, who cleverly used the popular magazines to publish his commercial fiction. He was attacked for his way of writing which turned many readers away

from the serious fiction. Wang Meng, arguing that twentieth-century Chinese literature had been dominated by writers' senses of exalted callings, defended Wang Shuo's counterexample in a piece called "*Duobi chonggao*" (躲避崇高). This piece drew a quick and sharp rebuke, but Wang Meng clearly stated out that: "Wang Shuo, philosophy of that there is nothing more to life than self-indulgence has gained widespread popularity in the late 1980s China, and Wang Shuo's success encouraged other writers to take advantage of the new opportunities for commercial publication."³⁹

Characterized as 'hooligan' literature, Wang Shuo's writing is iconoclastic and, a rare phenomenon, humorous. Describing a counter-culture of young people living on society's margins, Wang Shuo delights in language play, revelling in the intricacies of Beijing slang and parodying officialese. As an entrepreneur free of literary hierarchies, he has been able to preserve independence unavailable to other Chinese writers until very recently. Wang Shuo's work is seen by some as irredeemably vulgar and anti-intellectual, but he has made a contribution towards freeing contemporary Chinese fiction of didacticism and its intellectual focus.

In the early 1990s, an attempt to emulate his popularity in a different style was the controversial (and temporarily banned) best-seller, "*Ruined City*" (*Feidu* 废都 published in 1993) by Jia Pingwa. This well-known, prurient novel deliberately bowdlerizes sex scenes in imitation of censored versions of its model, the sixteenth-century classic *Golden Lotus* (金瓶梅). It is also a statement about the modernization process in contemporary China: "Tracing the sexual adventures of the artist/writer as entrepreneur, it epitomizes the materialist spirit characterizing the new Chinese market economy."⁴⁰

A writer much discussed and translated in the West is Wang Anyi⁴¹ (王安忆), who deals with formerly taboo subjects such as sexual obsession and adultery, thus, becoming important for her role in expanding the territory of contemporary Chinese fiction. She has ventured into ‘Roots’ territory with a charming novella “*Baotown*” (*Xiao Baozhuang* 小鲍庄 1984). The work which established her reputation as a writer is *Rustling Rain* (*Yu, Shashasha* 雨，沙沙沙 1981), one of a series of stories about young women in search of love and happiness. Wang Anyi’s most famous work is a trilogy on love and extra-marital sex published in the mid-1980s: *Love on a Barren Mountain* (*Huangshan Zhilian* 荒山之恋 1986), *Love in a Small Town* (*Xiaocheng Zhilian* 小城之恋 1986) and *Brocade Valley* (*Jinxiugu Zhilian* 金绣谷之恋 1987). But “most of her works are set in urban Shanghai and detail the materialistic desires and selfish passions of local/native Shanghai people.”⁴²

Further developments came from ‘avant-garde’ writers such as Can Xue (残雪), Su Tong (苏童), and Yu Hua (余华), whose works undermine the hegemony of realism. Yet these writers often display the same preoccupations with the Chinese past and national character as their more conventional colleagues over the generations. Where they differ is in their refusal to suggest solutions to China’s problems, or offer hope. The ‘self as hero’ is virtually absent as the younger writers turn to formal experimentation to shape their fiction.

Can Xue burst onto the literary scene in 1985 with a very brief, much anthologised story “*The Hut on the Hill*” (*Shanshangde xiaowu* 山上的小屋). This story encapsulates many of the preoccupations treated in more detail in her two novels “*Ageing Clouds*” (*Canglaode Fuyun* 苍老的浮云雾

1986) and “*Mud Street*” (*Huangnijing* 黄泥街 1987). *The Little Hut* is not directly about the Cultural Revolution or about living under an authoritarian regime but is infused with their horrific after-effects. It is pervaded by an atmosphere of paranoia and constriction. The home and, more specifically, the body are attacked from both within and without: the senses are impaired or act as vehicles of pain; veins throb like ‘worms under the skin’. There are barriers everywhere, dreams, and isolation, and Can Xue is the highly accomplished forerunner of a new wave of young writers, who take her themes of mental violence (in the early 1980s, Wang Meng was best known for these literary traits, by the end of the decade, Can Xue, who far exceeded Wang Meng) a step further, alienating many readers with their explicitly gory descriptions of physical violence and their seemingly total detachment.

Su Tong is preoccupied with history, creating fictive histories of a semi-imaginary China. Su Tong writes family histories, such as “*Wives and Concubines*” (*Qi qie Chengqun* 妻妾成群 1990), which focus on sexual transgression, violence, and psychological distress. Influenced by the work of the 1940s writer Zhang Ailing⁴³ (张爱玲), his work shares her predilection for detail and a claustrophobic atmosphere.

Wives and Concubines is set in a wealthy household in the 1930s. Chen Zuoqian already has a wife and two concubines competing for his attention, but brings destruction on the household when he buys Lotus, a young student. Lotus tries to secure her position by bearing Chen a son but her inability to do so leaves her in disgrace. She learns that an earlier concubine has gone insane, and is forced to witness the murder of another concubine whose affair with a doctor is discovered. Lotus comes to realise that women are treated in the Chen household as mere toys,

and she herself goes insane by the end of the story. Zhang Yimou's Oscar-nominated film version, *Raise the Red Lantern*, released in 1992, and won Su Tong international fame.

Su Tong's taste for the weird and grotesque in Chinese culture is even more pronounced in the 1987 novella "*Nineteen Thirty-four Escapes*" (*Yijiusansi nian de taowang* 一九三四年的逃亡). Like Mo Yan's *Red Sorghum*, it is the history of a family in the year 1934, told through the recollections of an adult who was a child at the time of the plot, and is filled with images of death and decay. *Nineteen Thirty-four Escapes*, however, is less an action story than a psychological study of degradation. The protagonist is the narrator's uncle, Chen Gouzai (Gouzai meaning 'puppy' 狗崽). In 1934 Gouzai is fifteen years old and collects dog droppings to raise money for a pair of rubber boots. The local landlord, Chen Wenzhi, who hoards young boys' semen in a white jade jar, gives him a pair of boots when Gouzai lets him masturbate him. Gouzai's father has moved into town where he lives with a young woman. Forced by poverty at home to seek him out, Gouzai spies on his father's lovemaking and is punished. Gouzai then dies as a result of accumulated mental and physical suffering. In 1934, also, plague swept through the narrator's village and corpses are left to rot in ditches, and the narrator describes his grandmother's intense pleasure as she throws the bodies of her five children into a pond and inhales the putrid smell of death. Critics have read stories such as this as symbolic of the decadence and moral bankruptcy of contemporary Chinese culture.

Quite different is the brutal and horrific violence of Yu Hua's work, although his manner, too, is detached. "Yu Hua provides a radical critique of Chinese culture by rendering explicit the violence he sees as inherent within it."⁴⁴

Yu Hua subverts the entrenched value systems of Chinese culture, but without distinction, leaving one with few recognizable signposts. He parodies genres such as the classical Chinese romance “*A Classical Romance*” (*Gudian Aiqing*, 古典爱情 published in 1988) or the detective story “*Mistake by the River*” (*Heibian de Cuowu* 河边的错误 also in 1988), subverting both their form and their conventional meanings. In “*One Kind of Reality*” (*Xianshi yizhong* 现实一种 1988) he undermines the myth of the Chinese family in a story of arbitrary violence and revenge utterly devoid of normal human emotions, as one of two brothers is dissected in a satirical and explicit fashion by jolly doctors chattering happily over their work. The novella chronicles how a petty family squabble turns into a series of family murders. Few readers will be left undisturbed by the discrepancy between the bloody family feud and the sly, matter-of-fact style in which Yu Hua narrates the incidents. Yu Hua has been criticized for his desolate view of life and his penchant for the neurotic. But personal idiosyncrasies aside, all he does is lay bare the horrors that Chinese are used to in life but would find rather incredible when encountered in art.

An Outline of Wang Meng's Contribution to Contemporary Chinese Literature

Through the brief discussion of the major contemporary Chinese writers in this chapter so far, it is arguably to say that it is impossible to find another writer in China that can compare with Wang Meng, who had been exiled to the countryside for some twenty years for his critical portrayal of the bureaucracy and apathy among the Party officials in the mid 1950s, and who, since 1977, has published many works of fiction and many prose

articles, articles on literary theory, literary criticism, essays and reports on travels abroad. Among the works of fiction, a number of short stories and novels which appeared in the late 1970s and the early 1980s have widely attracted attention on account of their literary innovations. In his nearly fifty-year long writing career, Wang Meng became one of the most well-known and controversial fictional writers in China.

Wang Meng, when only at the age of nineteen, began writing his first novel, *Long Live Youth* (*Qingchun Wansui* 青春万岁)⁴⁵, around 1953, completing the final draft in 1956. *Long Live Youth* told of idealistic high-school graduates in the year right after “liberation” in 1949, and described how this group of students worked together to help the daughter of a former capitalist and the adopted daughter of a foreign missionary to overcome the disadvantage of their backgrounds, and to devote themselves to the new Chinese state. The story was published in serial form in the Shanghai newspaper *Wenhuibao* from the beginning of 1957. Wang Meng was immediately brought into the literary spotlight, and came to be regarded as the new star of the young generation of writers in China.

The year 1956 was noteworthy in China’s “literary new era (文学新时期)”. In that year a large group of young Chinese writers, such as Liu Binyan, Gao Xiaosheng and Wang Meng, emerged, bringing new themes and fresh styles to the literary scene, and splashing it with bright colours⁴⁶. The power to touch readers’ hearts remains undiminished even now in some of the writing published then. *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department* (*Zuzhibu Xinlai de Nianqing Ren* 组织部新来的青年人)⁴⁷ would belong on such a list. “Such stories reflected newly growing rifts in the social fabric of the young nation, and they did so in remarkably mature form, as the fruition of a compelling new

aesthetic.”⁴⁸ Those works should be numbered among the best pieces produced in the People’s Republic of China since its founding. It was unfortunate that in 1957, with the movement of Anti-Rightist Campaign, a substantial number of young and promising Chinese writers were mistakenly branded as Rightists, and stories like *Young Newcomer* became targets of abuse.

This particular piece had as its main characters Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen, who, together with Wang Meng himself, shared similar experiences with many other Chinese people. Wang Meng and the protagonists of his story represent the progressive youth of that generation, a generation that grew up in a time of terrific turmoil. They threw themselves with all the zeal of their political precocity into the cause they thought was right. They were ready at any moment to lay their lives on the line for their beliefs. In short, they boldly sounded a funeral knell for the old China and beat the drums that hastened the birth of the new China. *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department* moves many people because it unabashedly reveals the ideas and states of mind particular to that generation. It expresses their selfless daring, but it does not conceal their immaturity and impetuosity. They were too young, after all. They were only fourteen or fifteen when politics sucked them into its whirlpool. Their strengths and weaknesses interwove to make them sensitive, upright, and passionate in their hatred of wrongdoing. Having no tolerance for unsound or unreasonable things, they made stringent demands on others to be rid of such things, and they made the same demands on themselves. When the time came that their ideals collided with reality, tragedy was inevitable. This is the tragedy of the fictional characters Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen, and it is also the tragedy of Wang Meng’s own life. The literature of an era was lost in obscurity for nearly twenty years, right up until the late 1970s.

After incurring political punishment during the Anti-Rightist Movement, Wang Meng sank to the lowest level of society. For more than twenty years he lived together with dirt-poor farmers and herdsmen in Hebei and Xinjiang. The rude lessons of life were profound for an idealist like Wang Meng. He gradually realized that “ideals are transitional aims that people pursue and hope for, but they cannot be reached by simply waving our arms and raising a rallying cry.”⁴⁹ Ideals are not just yearnings for a beautiful life: they are beliefs to be made real by grounding oneself in labour and struggling through a hundred adversities.

Since picking up his pen again in 1978, Wang Meng has been writing pieces of a greatly different character from his earlier work. The change in depth of his understanding is apparent. Of course change is also apparent in his way of handling a story, due to his constant experiments with technique. But regardless of how many changes his writing goes through, regardless of what it develops into, it always shows flashes of the youthful ideals of *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department*. Often, as if in spite of himself, Wang Meng betrays fond memories of his younger years--a time he looks back on with pride.

When talking of his own writing, Wang Meng goes as far as to relegate any fixation on ideals to a past that will never return. His fiction, to be sure, has taken on greater ambiguity. The passionate pursuit of ideals that filled *The Young Newcomer* and *Long Live Youth* seems to have grown fainter, or has at least been removed from a central position. There is more bringing of darker elements out in the open, things that are an apparently absurd jumble of the old and new, laughable yet deplorable. “On the surface this new tendency bears no relation to the tone of his earlier work, and even seems antagonistic to it, yet giving it some thought one discovers a certain connection between the two. The latter tendency expresses an attitude of ridicule and disapproval of

the grotesque, the absurd and the freakish.”⁵⁰ Is it not likely that such an attitude grew out of the earlier pursuit of truth and beauty? An overview of materials Wang Meng published in the years between the late 1970s to the late 1980s, with their radical departures in tone from earlier works, will show what connections exist.

In some of these works, the “blood link” to his earlier writing is apparent without the need for analysis. Examples are *The Most Precious* (*Zui Baogui de* 最宝贵的 1978), *Dream of the Sea* (*Hai de Meng* 海的梦 1980) and *The Jacket at the Bottom of the Trunk* (*Muxiang Shenchu de Zichou Huafu* 木箱深处的紫绸花服 1983). Wang Meng wrote *The Most Precious* when he was just re-emerging as a writer, and, putting matters frankly, it is a rather hidebound short story. *The Most Precious* was written in 1978 and it referred to the period of the Cultural Revolution. The story tells of the secretary of the Municipal Party Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, Yan Yixing, who has just learnt that ten years earlier, his son, Dandan, exposed the whereabouts of Yan’s best friend and comrade-in-arms during the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, in terms of Wang Meng’s development as a writer, this short piece is in a way more than just a simple story. The title encapsulates the central theme of the story, which condemns in sharp words and righteous tone the inhuman acts committed during the ten-year course of the Cultural Revolution by certain people who betrayed their friends and sacrificed others to save themselves. These were the very people who called on others to stand up for the truth whatever the cost, and to lay their lives on the line without fear. They called for an unyielding spirit of truth and justice, which was what marked the thought of Lin Zhen and Zhong Yicheng.

Dream of the Sea and *The Jacket at the Bottom of the Trunk* were written after new avenues of thought had opened for the author; they broke through the shell of form that Wang Meng had used to handle material proficiently in the past: "The demands of content made a breakthrough necessary: Wang Meng needed a torrent in which to pour forth the experience and feeling of a once aspiring generation."⁵¹ The form Wang Meng settled on was subjective and lyrical. He poised his main characters--Miu Keyan in *Dream of the Sea* and Li Shan in *The Jacket at the Bottom of the Trunk*--at the very moment when "bitterness is gone and sweetness comes,"⁵² and allowed them to vent the sentiments that had lain dormant in their minds for twenty years: the concern for the future that knew no bounds, the anguish, the awakening to certain truths about life, and the hopes they still treasured deep in their hearts. The sea and violet brocade jacket are emblematic. With the best years of his life already past, Miu Keyan finally gets his first long-awaited glimpse of the ocean, at which he can not help but sigh, "After what I've been through, my head has grown white like you, whitecaps! Too late, too late."⁵³ But still, at the end, he cannot hold back the cry; "Sea, I - love - you!"⁵⁴ This heart-rending cry is not just directed at the sea: it is the voice of a resolute generation whose aspirations remain as yet unfulfilled. A still more complex mixture of feelings wells up in Li Shan at the sight of the violet brocade jacket, a reminder of what was to have been the joy and blessedness of her youth. She regrets that it never got the attention it should have, never contributed to its owner's appearance. Its chance was missed; it was put away to grow uselessly old. She cherishes it with a special fondness, and even wants to help make up for what it missed. She makes a formal gesture of giving it to her future daughter-in-law.⁵⁵

This is Wang Meng's way of bringing out the question of how aims and ideas can be passed from generation to generation, though they must change ceaselessly. Wang Meng feels that a

“pretty piece of clothing” cannot “serve as a reminder of youth and love for two different generations.”⁵⁶ Though the jacket has grown old for nothing, Li Shan feels that she has passed through the trials of the years as best she could, and so sees “no need for resentment and regret, not to speak of envying the lot of others.”⁵⁷ The best thing is to let the jacket “change with the elements, fleetingly, in the depths of the heart.”⁵⁸ To readers, it might say that these lines are a capsule statement of what experience has taught Wang Meng. They are recognition, gained by weathering the storms of history, of our aims and fervour, our completed and never-to-be-completed tasks, and the change of aims from one generation to the next. From the tumult that brought his personal fortunes first to ruin and then to prosperity, Wang Meng has learned equanimity. Gone is the drive that knew no caution. Even the tension in *The Most Precious* is gone. Wang Meng had to pass through a raging tempest and then bask in a gentle breeze before he could arrive at this quiet maturity. Still, quiet as he appears on the surface, something speaks to us of a true heart that has not changed within. Stories like these are the windows of Wang Meng’s spirit. Wang Meng has done his utmost to conceal his feelings in his writing to avoid the confessional urge. These few stories, however, came about because he could not hold himself back, and it is precisely in this that they convey the author’s emotions so faithfully.

Wang Meng has another vein of stories which we can identify by the pains he has taken to seek out something new, both in form and content. These are stories that could only be crafted by hard thought. They are Wang Meng’s personal favourites, and they have stirred enthusiastic response among his readers.⁵⁹ Typical of such works are the novellas *Butterfly* (*Hudie* 蝴蝶 1980) and *The Strain of Meeting* (*Xiangjian Shinan* 相见时难 1982). The short stories *Kite Streamers* (*Fengzheng Piaodai* 风筝飘带 1979)⁶⁰ and *The Voices of Spring* (*Chun Zhi Sheng* 春之声

1980)⁶¹ are also of this type. These stories do not adopt the manner of earlier stories, nor are they confined by a protagonist's nostalgia for youth gone by. They put other techniques to work, touch other areas of experience, and new kinds of characters are brought forth to embody a fuller range of ideas. But no matter what gaily coloured forms they take, a common purpose informs these stories: "They tell us that just as *Antaeus* could not leave Mother Earth, individuals can not separate themselves from the people, and ultimately they can not turn away from their original beliefs. Once you distance yourself from people, no advancement at home or success abroad will keep an irremediable emptiness from overtaking your spirit."⁶² Is there not a common thread joining this message with the one expressed in *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department* and *Dream of the Sea*?

Wang Meng's novella *Butterfly* has received tremendous response both in and outside of China. This is partly due to bold departures from narrative convention--such as reworking the temporal order, darting back and forth in space and shifting the central characters--but it is also because of the strong quality of its revolutionary idealism. Readers overseas may have been especially attracted to the spirit of self-examination that persists in the midst of cataclysm. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution the main character Zhang Siyuan is sent down to a rural village. In one day he is transformed from a deputy department head to just another peasant. Ten years later, with the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, he goes from being "Old Zhang" (老张) to "Assistant Chief Zhang." (张副部长). Wang Meng puts him through several such wrenching reversals, until disillusionment comes like an awakening from a dream, leaving him unsure if he is Assistant Chief Zhang dreaming he is Old Zhang or Old Zhang dreaming he is Assistant Chief Zhang. No one can understand this state of mind that has not passed through sudden, dislocating changes--the kind

of changes that turn your head around and addle your sense of direction.

This moment of confusion on awakening alludes to Zhuang Zi's dream of the butterfly⁶³. Some reviewers think Wang Meng's writing shows clear signs of influence from the thought of Lao Zi⁶⁴ and Zhuang Zi, however, not everyone agrees with this since it lacks sufficient evidence for this assertion.⁶⁵ It can be argued that Wang Meng's literary ideas are formed by two major influences, "the more important being the glowing revolutionary romanticism from the early literature of the Soviet Union, and the other being an attitude toward life traditionally held by China's intellectuals--an attitude that stresses the search for a meaning to human existence, giving strict attention to self-discipline and always ready for self-examination."⁶⁶ It is a broad-minded outlook born of a dialectical understanding of the fortunate and disastrous sides of human life. Of course during thirty long years there has been ebb and flow in the two major currents that make up Wang Meng's thinking. The accumulation of years and experience, with all the individual and collective disasters along the way, has added to Wang Meng's depth of understanding.

Butterfly is the most concentrated expression of Wang Meng's thinking at this stage. By tracing the relationships of Zhang Siyuan with his first wife Hai Yun, and with Qiu Wen--the woman doctor he eventually meets in the village--Wang Meng reflects Zhang Siyuan's and his own gradual recognition: romantic dreams conceived without regard to practical concerns will be smashed to pieces in the confrontation with cruel reality.⁶⁷ Zhang Siyuan is forced to plant his feet on the ground and think of how he might fit in with the pattern of unfolding events. Zhang Siyuan's first love, Hai Yun, a girl fresh out of middle school, is the epitome of a revolutionary romantic, naive and filled with the spirit of self-sacrifice. This is a character type which Wang Meng is partial to:

he has portrayed a number of female characters in this vein, such as Zhao Huiwen of *The Newcomer in the Organisation Department*, Zheng Bo in *Long Live Youth*, and -- a character born at almost the same time as Hai Yun--Xiao Ling of *Andante Cantabile* (*Ruge de Xingban* 如歌的行板 1981).

It is worth pointing out that in his early stories, Wang Meng forgot all restraint in singing the praises of such characters, but in these later stories, he finally shows what a heartbreaking life they led, reeling under blows of adversity from all sides. The view of life that Wang Meng endorses now is the one held by Qiu Wen, the female country doctor who Zhang Siyuan meets and falls in love with after going to live in the village. She is a woman who grows gradually stronger by meeting hardship head-on. She has lived through disaster without resigning herself to fate; in times of suffering she helps others without thought of return. To preserve her independence she turns down a chance for a station in life that many would envy--being a Department Chief's wife. She answers Zhang Siyuan, who made a special trip into the mountains to propose marriage, in the words: "Why should I give up my work, my position, my neighbours and relatives, just so I can go off with you and be a Department Chief's wife? . . . Life as an official's wife would suffocate me. I would not be able to find my true place in such surroundings. . . . I will go on being a country doctor, doing something to ease the pain of these mountain folks. Don't forget us, and that is all I ask. I appreciate your asking me. I just hope you'll do all you can to help the people, not hurt them. If you do right by them, the people will be grateful."⁶⁸ She too is a woman of ideals, but a mature one, aware of people and events, clear-headed and realistic.

The Strain of Meeting is a far cry from the stories mentioned above, both in style and theme. Still, there are

connections if one looks for them. This is a novella on a subject that was popular in China in the early 1980s--overseas Chinese coming back to search for their roots. In this novella Wang Meng stayed clear of the conventional tragic separations and long-delayed but joyful reunions with parents, siblings and lovers. Instead Wang described a meeting after 30 years of two childhood playmates who once travelled the road of revolution together as young intellectuals. The forces that separated them and brought them together again had to do with ideals and beliefs. The American professor Lan Peiyu did not come back to China just to seek out old places and friends, but to find a lost dream. She was not looking for ancestral roots or emotional roots, but for roots to anchor her beliefs and ideals. She was eager to see Weng Shihan, who in her eyes represented that dream. Had Wang Meng ended the story with the main characters revelling in the joy of togetherness or bemoaning their time apart, he would have forced it into an artificial mood, for both characters had already travelled for 30 years down separate roads.⁶⁹

Wang Meng knew what he was doing given subject matter that lent itself easily to mediocre treatment; he mastered his material by fixing on the theme of "The strain of meeting matches parting."⁷⁰ He dealt not just with the objective limitations that keep people apart, but more importantly with subjective obstacles. On Weng Shihan's side, the obstacle was his unwillingness to settle his feelings and make up his mind about Lan Peiyu one way or the other, since he had never clearly understood her backing down from their vow to stand at the forefront of the revolutionary line. A complex person like Lan Peiyu can be understood in different ways, depending on who is looking at her. Here, once again, Wang Meng makes plain the breadth of perspective from which he views people. He gently unveils this delicate woman, pointing out her lingering memories of an old dream. After all their hardships, she and Weng still feel what can best be described by the line "The

silkworm winds till death its heart's own thread.”(春蚕到死丝方尽)⁷¹ Wang Meng allows these two cramped spirits to find a sort of communication, but then, with a clever change of key, the theme of divisive beliefs emerges once more.

Aside from the above types of fiction, Wang Meng takes pride in originating a type of story with farcical overtones. In such stories Wang “employs a tongue-in-cheek manner and outrageously concocted diatribes to inveigh against certain absurdities and satirize narrow, unmotivated people who have the laughable tendency to think too highly of themselves.”⁷² Given these stories, there need be no doubt what a well-informed man Wang Meng is, and how rich is his fund of words. These stories give all the proof that is needed of Wang Meng's acuity and humour, and of his keen powers of observation that cut through the facade of things. After beginning with *Eyes of the Night* (*Ye de Yan* 夜的眼 1979) and *A Courtful of Advisor* (*Shuoke Yingmen* 说客盈门 1979), he continued in this mischievous literary vein for several years. Each year he published something that has the ring of vaudeville patter, and each year the pieces get more reckless and free-flowing. The published collection named after the title story *The Jacket at the Bottom of the Trunk* includes a few of these pieces: *A Trumped-Up Affair* (*Moxuyou Shijian* 莫须有事件 1982), *The Salad Explodes* (*Sela de Baozha* 色拉的爆炸 1983), *Green Dragon Pond* (*Qinglong Tan* 青龙潭 1983), and *Death of a Boxtree* (*Huangyang Shugen Zhisi* 黄杨树根之死 1983). All of them seem absurd on the surface, yet they are true to life nevertheless. They are loaded with laughs, yet marked by streaks of tears. In the preface to his first farcical short story, *Anecdotes in the Life of Director Maimaiti* (*Maimaiti Chuzhang Yishi* 买买提处长轶事 1980), Wang Mang wrote, “When you've cried all your tears, it's time to laugh. . . . Humour is a superiority

complex for the intelligent.”⁷³ China’s greatest novelist, Cao Xueqin (曹雪芹), once wrote of his masterpiece *A Dream of Red Mansions* (*Hongloumeng* 红楼梦): ‘Pages full of fantastic words, penned with bitter tears.’ Great writers seemingly share an attitude that counterpoises “fantastic” to “bitter.”⁷⁴

Wang Meng often displays Wang-Meng-ian humour in handling his material, but he displays Wang-Meng-ian shiftiness as well. Elements of fantasy and black humour mark his late 1980s’ fiction. In *The Man with Moveable Parts* (*Huodong Bianrenxing* 活动变人行 1986), the hero Ni Zao visits a friend of his father’s in Europe, where certain household items trigger memories of his childhood in the 1940s. His parents were ill-matched and, unable to obtain a divorce; his father slipped away in secret and joined the Communist forces. After his victorious return to Beijing, he divorced his wife and married again, but remained discontented with his lot. Ni Zao remembers a foreign toy which his father gave him: it is a figure with movable parts, and each different position gives rise to a different human form. As a metaphor, the toy implies that people are twisted by circumstance into weird and unhappy creatures. Because the novel spans the period both before and after 1949, it suggests that Wang Meng sees misfortune as a constant state of being in any society.

Wang Meng also writes another kind of farcical story reflecting his life in exile in the rural district of Yili. These stories are nothing like his absurdist diatribes, but they have a humour all their own. He has written a series of eight stories about this stage of his life, with the title *In Yili* (*Zai Yili* 在伊犁 1983). The stories describe life among the Uygur people, and since the Uygur have their own irrepressible sense of humour, such description easily takes on a comic tone. On the other side of the coin, though years of shared hardship bound him to them, their weaknesses did

not escape his keen eyes. He had nothing but praise for their humble kindness, honesty and patience, but he did not spare their backwardness, their lack of motivation and their habit of celebrating when there was nothing to celebrate. *In Yili* is his stirring portrait of this lovable and sometimes laughable group, with just the right touch of commentary on their ethnic character to serve as a framework for high comedy.

Wang Meng's comic stories, whether of the absurdist type or those portraying the strengths and foibles of folkish characters, are far removed from the theme that is closest to his heart. We should not force them to fit the pattern set by his other works, for they contain no direct tribute to high ideals. Nevertheless, they express the author's dissatisfaction with certain failings and deformities, and as such, they make an implicit plea for something better.

Wang Meng does not overvalue the function of literature: he feels that literature does not amount to a direct involvement in life. It can not direct the advance of history, and it can not make history move backwards. What it can do is make people aware. By conveying the author's ideals, a literary work can make people mindful of higher obligations. Perhaps the purpose of Wang Meng's comic stories is to prod people into awareness of his ideals. By showing ugliness for what it is, he rouses our longing for what is beautiful.

In September 1989 Wang Meng was catapulted into international headlines when the Chinese government, as part of its purge of liberal officials following the crushing of the student-led democracy movement in Tiananmen Square, announced Wang Meng's dismissal as Minister of Culture. Wang had long been a popular and respected, yet controversial, writer, having published

innovative fiction that depicted the psychological underside of political life in modern China.

Shortly before June 1989, Wang Meng wrote a short story *The Stubborn Porridge* (*Jianying de Xizhou* 坚硬的稀粥 1989) which “foreshadowed in its narrative several of the social contradictions that were to surface forcefully in the events leading up to the Tiananmen Incident.”⁷⁵ This story told of a traditional Chinese family, comprising four generations, coming into conflict when trying to adapt to the modern world, questioning even such a seemingly simple matter as breakfast. “Adopting a Western-style breakfast in lieu of their time-honoured menu of pickles and porridge is the first of many changes.”⁷⁶

The story was first published in the February 1989 issue of *The Chinese Writer* (中国作家), and it won the 1989-1990 “*Hundred Flowers*” Prize (百花奖) for literature soon after its publication. “This brought the story to the attention of the establishment conservatives and their response was to attack the story in the journals *The Literary Gazette* (文艺报) and *Midstream* (中流), asserting that it was over-critical of the reforms then taking place in China.”⁷⁷ Wang Meng was charged with attempting to attack the old generation of Communist Party leaders, including Deng Xiaoping.

In his own article *On Stubborn Porridge* (话说这碗<<粥>>--我写<<坚硬的稀粥>>) Wang Meng wrote: :

1986年8月，我与文化部一位女同志出差拉萨。这位同志每天早餐只吃稀饭，馒头，咸菜，拒绝西式藏式食品。西藏自治区文化局的一位局长同志(藏族)对此开玩笑说：“汉族同志身体素质差，就是稀饭，咸菜造成的，我一定要设法消灭

稀饭咸菜。” 他的这个玩笑话引起了我的思索：从营养学的观点看，正确的态度应是随着生活的提高和眼界的开阔而逐渐予以补充和提高。而这又是与我一贯的提倡建设，提倡渐进，反对偏激，反对清谈的思想相一致。这就是小说<<坚硬的稀粥>>的题材和主题的由来。⁷⁸

In August 1986, I went on a business trip to Lhasa together with a female officer from the Ministry of Culture. This comrade only ate porridge, steamed buns and pickled vegetable for breakfast and refused any kind of Tibetan style food. The head of the Tibet Culture Bureau (who is a Tibetan) made a joke by saying: “Han peoples’ health is poor because they only have porridge and pickled vegetable for breakfast. I need to think of a way to change their habit.” His joke made me think: according to nutritional science, the right attitude should be that along with the improvement in our lives and life style we have to raise our living standard accordingly. That idea is in line with my thinking, since I have always encouraged adjusting to new things and making changes gradually, but have always been against going to extremes. This is how the theme of my story “Hard Porridge” came about.

Readers nationwide gave their own verdict of the porridge controversy in increased circulation of the story across the country, with articles dealing with porridge from every conceivable angle: Porridge Fun, Porridge Cure, Porridge Flavour North and South. It was even suggested that 1991 be named the “Year of Porridge.”⁷⁹ Wang Meng, however, then went on to publish a different kind of book *On the Last 40 Chapters of a Dream of the Red Mansion*⁸⁰ (话说<<红楼梦>>后四十回), one of the four famous Chinese classical novels. This book received the only special book prize in 1990 in China.⁸¹

In 1992, Wang firstly made the suggestion publicly that great reform should take place within the Chinese Writers’ Association, and that Chinese writers should support themselves with their writing, and not rely on a government salary. His

suggestion was, unsurprisingly, immediately attacked by many writers in China.⁸² In that same year, Wang Meng started to write a series of semi-autobiographical novels, the first of which was *Season of Love* (恋爱的季节, 1992), which many book reviewers regarded as a new way to express the author's state of mind.⁸³ Wang Meng also wrote an article, *Avoid Lofty* (躲避崇高), which positively, however, retained to certain degree, to appraise Wang Shuo and Su Tong's way of writing.

In 1994, Wang Meng published several articles attacking and questioning the argument of the loss of humanity spirits in Chinese society. His articles were stirring the great debating national-wide among Chinese intellectuals of how to rebuilt human spirits.⁸⁴

The variety and extent of Wang Meng's accomplishments and activities reveal that several western writers also influenced Wang Meng's style of writing to a certain degree, for example, Honore de Balzac, the French journalist and writer, one of the creators of realism in literature; and a number of Russian writers, like Ivan Turgenev, the novelist, poet, and playwright, best known for his detailed descriptions of everyday live in Russia in the 19th century. In 1994, a German scholar interviewed Wang Meng in Beijing.⁸⁵ During the interview, he put some questions to Wang: "Have you been influenced by any western literary trend since you have applied different ways of writing? Which western writer do you admire the most?"⁸⁶ Wang Meng quickly answered: "Your question is rather difficult to answer since I like a lot of foreign writers. Take Russia and the Soviet Union as an example, writers such as Leo Tolstoy (托尔斯泰), Ivan Turgenev (屠格涅夫), Anton Chekov (契柯夫), Nikolai Asilievich Gogol (果戈理), Aleksandr Fadeev (法捷耶夫) and Konstantin Fedin (费定). Besides these, I also like the German writer Johann Wolfgang von

Goethe (歌德), the English writer Charles Dickens (狄更斯) and the French writer Honore de Balzac (巴尔扎克), as well as a number of contemporary American short story writers. However, I never idolize one writer, regardless of whether he is from China or from abroad, and take him as my model.”⁸⁷

Wang Meng has travelled a broad road as a writer. He has tried hard to nurture his writing as a unique outgrowth of his own thinking. Though his collections of stories are not of uniform quality, their range of experimentation makes him a worthy representative, both politically and creatively, of the generation he belongs to as a writer. He represents a literary generation that commenced its search for truth and began creative work at an early age, then came to maturity in a labyrinth of hardship. His works are a faithful and moving reflection of the rude awakening of that generation, their aimless stumbling and their reawakening to ideals. Of course that reawakening happened differently for each author. Some kept more of a hold on utopian ideas, and some adopted a more pragmatic stance. Wang Meng did not give up his pursuit of ideals, but the lessons of watching men's affairs shift like clouds in the wind were not lost on him. Sometimes dissatisfaction moves him to ridicule the pigheadedness and unreasonableness he sees, but just as often he shows understanding and tolerance. Such tolerance is viewed by some readers as giving in to the ugly reality. But perhaps Wang Meng has taken the right approach. In the face of a twisted reality, one man's anger does little good. This being the case, the duty of a writer--and herein is the appeal of his works--lies in setting people's eyes on goals that may not be readily attainable. He rouses them from their complacency and calls forth a determination for struggle. It is for this very reason that Wang Meng's stories have so moved his readers.

Chinese literature since the late 1980s has seen writer forays into a world of disreputable romance and sophistication. “These writers construct a locus where desire is legitimated and transgression systematized, exhibiting depravity in a gallery of modern *flaneurs* and femmes fatales consumed by a perennial romantic yearning. Instead of the ‘sublime figure’ that dominates literature from the May Fourth to the Maoist era, these writers reveal aspects of modern Chinese people rarely touched on by their predecessors: their insatiable curiosity to probe the labyrinth of desire, their indulgence in the aesthetic as well as erotic spectacles of the decadent, and their postures of indifference, compelled by the premature anxiety of a *fin-de-siecle* epoch.”⁸⁸

The 1980s and 1990s were a period in which more Chinese writers travelled overseas more frequently than ever before, thanks to increasing freedom of movement, combined with a continuing concern over the political stability of their homeland. The expatriate experience is one of the major themes of twentieth-century Chinese literature. May Fourth writers such as Lu Xun, Yu Dafu (郁达夫), Bing Xin (冰心), Guo Moruo (郭沫若), Xu Dishan (许地山), Xu Zhimo, and Lao She (老舍) were all allegedly motivated to “write China” as a result of their foreign experiences. Overseas academic, cultural, and political challenges drove these writers into identity crises; in return, they produced compelling works dealing with crises both personal and national.

The latest exodus of intellectuals and *litterati* from China has added a new poignancy to this tradition of expatriate writing. Ah Cheng, the forerunner of the root-seeking movement, settled in the United States, whereas the proto-modernist playwright and novelist Gao Xingjian was granted permanent residence in France. Bei Dao, the leading Misty Poet and founder of the much-acclaimed Jintian [Today] magazine, is now teaching in America.

Liu Suola, travelled widely in the United States and Europe, and is now permanently based in London. While China may still remain the source of their inspiration, these writers, unlike their predecessors, show fewer symptoms of an “obsession with China”; rather, they attempt to diagnose the disease. Their overseas experience has compelled them to ponder the consequences of choosing nationalist causes over individual quests.⁸⁹

The new “challenge” to Chinese literature is also made possible by new communication technologies and increasingly global circulation of economic and cultural capital. With the assistance of computers and an international telecommunication system, writers and their publishers are able to contact each other without troubling to pass through political agencies. Works that were once unpublishable for reasons in force in one place may quickly be submitted somewhere else. For instance, writings by Wang Meng, Mo Yan, Su Tong, and Wang Anyi, four of the most prominent Chinese literati, now often see first publication in Taiwan and Hong Kong. “Whereas old-fashioned Marxists were wont to discern signs of crass technocratic incursion into authentic local experience, Chinese readers have found ways to validate their own choice of truths and myths.”⁹⁰

By means of the discussion in this chapter, it is possible to elucidate how and why Wang Meng has become one of China’s most prominent literary figures. During half a century of his career as a writer, Wang Meng has proven his literary dexterity, changing his literary approach, sometimes in step with, often ahead of social and political developments. His achievements can also be regarded as a reflection of the 50 years of development of contemporary Chinese literature. Through studying Wang Meng and his works, we can have a more vivid picture of developments in modern Chinese literature, as well as in Chinese society as a whole.

Notes

- 1 Bonnie S. McDougall & Kam Louie, *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century*, Hurst & Company, London, 1997, p. 82
- 2 Liang Qichao (1873-1929) – Chinese reformer, scholar and journalist. He received a Chinese classical education in his early years and later received a Western-style education from Kang Youwei. Like Kang, he subsequently became an advocate of progressive social and institutional change.
- 3 Alison Bailey lived and worked in Beijing for a number of years in the 1980s, and now teaches Chinese literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.
- 4 *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing* p.83
- 5 Ibid., p.84
- 6 The May Fourth Movement, (1919), the first mass movement in modern Chinese history. On May 4, about 5,000 university students in Beijing protested the Versailles Conference (Apr. 28, 1919) awarding Japan the former German leasehold of Jiaozhou, Shandong province. Demonstrations and strikes spread to Shanghai, and a nationwide boycott of Japanese goods followed. The May Fourth Movement began a patriotic outburst on the part of new urban intellectuals against foreign imperialists and warlords. Intellectuals identified the political establishment with China's failure in the modern era, and hundreds of new periodicals published attacks on Chinese tradition, turning to foreign ideas and ideologies. The movement split into leftist and liberal wings. The latter advocated gradual cultural reform as exemplified by Hu Shih, who interpreted the pragmatism of John Dewey, while leftists like Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao introduced Marxism and advocated political action. The movement also popularized vernacular literature, and promoted political participation by women, and educational reforms.
- 7 *Literature of the People's Republic of China* by Kai-Yu Hsu and Chapter One: *Historic Settings in The use of Literature—Life in the Socialist Chinese Literature System* by Perry Link.
- 8 Ibid., p.84
- 9 Ibid., p.85
- 10 Zhao Shuli (1906-1970), born in Qinshui, Shanxi, was one of the most prominent early revolutionary writers.
- 11 Bonnie S. McDougall & Kam Louie, p. 221
- 12 Here the 'golden age' (1950-1956) meant the years between after the founding of the People's Republic of China to the Hundred Flowers Movement, when writers in China enjoyed the relaxation of their professional life.

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- 13 Hao Ran (1932 -) is a well-known writer in China from the 1960s. Hao Ran is his pen name and his real name is Liang Jinguang.
- 14 *Bright Sunny Skies* (艳阳天) was begun by Hao Ran in 1960, and completed and published in 1965. The novel was adopted by the radical left as a model of new fiction; it was one of the very few works from the 1960s available in bookshops during the Cultural Revolution. The novel was made into a film in 1973 under the title *Jinguang dadao* (金光大道).
- 15 *The Scenery* was written in 1975, and it was a story based on country life in the northern part of Xinjiang. Wang Meng had many difficulties in writing this novel. As the “gang of four” was still in power, still promoting their doctrine of “three emphases” (san tuchu 三突出) for literature and art, Wang Meng dared not to cross the line and write what he wanted to write. At the beginning of 1976, Wang finished his draft and was invited by the China Youth Publish House to Beidaihe to revise his draft, though, ultimately, it was still rejected for publication. 参见 王蒙与崔瑞芳 p. 47
- 16 *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing* p.85
- 17 For various parts in this chapter, the main reference source is from the book: <<中国当代文学概论>>由高文池, 陈慧忠编著, 1996年6月, 上海外语教育出版社
- 18 *Introduction of Selected Works of Wang Meng*, Vol. 1, p.5
- 19 *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing* p.86
- 20 *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century*, p. 402
- 21 Ibid., pp.401-404
- 22 Ibid., p. 401
- 23 The Non-Official Magazine, Today Vol. 1, 1978
- 24 *The Younger Generation's Ideals for a New Literature in After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society 1978-1981* ed by Jeffrey C. Kinkley 1985 p.197
- 25 高文池, 陈慧忠, p.96
- 26 *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing*, p.88
- 27 Ibid., p.89
- 28 Gao Xiaosheng, “‘Li Shunda zaowu’ shimo” (*The Background of “Li Shunda Builds a House”* 李顺大造屋始末), in Gao Xiaosheng yanjiun ziliao (*Research Materials on Gao Xiaosheng* 高晓声研究资料), ed. Lianyungang shi jiaoshi jinxiu xueyuan 连云港市教师进修学院 (July 1981), p.40
- 29 *The Politics of Technique: Perspectives of Literary Dissidence in Contemporary Chinese Fiction*, by Leo Ou-Fan Lee in *After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society 1978-1981*, p.181

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- 30 Ibid., p.162
- 31 *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing* p.89
- 32 Ibid., p.90
- 33 高文池, 陈慧忠, p.106
- 34 Dai Houying, *Ren a Ren* (人啊, 人Guangzhou renmin chubashe,) P.358
- 35 *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing* p.90
- 36 Shangzhou (商州) is located in the north-western Chinese province of Shaanxi.
- 37 Zhang Yimou (1951-) is, perhaps, China's most famous film director. He is also well-known internationally. His major films include: *Judou* (菊豆), *Red Sorghum* (红高粱), and *Raise the Red Lantern* (大红灯笼高高挂).
- 38 *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing* p.91
- 39 Bonnie S. McDougall & Kam Louie, p.417
And also refer to: Perry Link's *The Use of Literature*, p. 128
- 40 Ibid., p.92
- 41 Wang Anyi (1954 -) began her literary career as an orthodox writer and became noted for defending the role of intellectuals in modern China. Born in Nanjing, Wang Anyi grew up in Shanghai and went to a village in Anhui as an educated youth in 1970. In 1972 she was admitted to the Xuzhou Art Workers' Troupe, where she began writing essays and short stories. Returning to Shanghai in 1978, she was appointed editor of the journal *Childhood Years*.
- 42 *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing* p.92
- 43 Zhang Ailing (1921-1995), also known as Eileen Chang, was born in Shanghai but spent part of her childhood in Beijing and Tianjin. Her family was wealthy but troubled; her father was addicted to opium, and her mother divorced him and left for France when their daughters were still very young; she did not return to China until 1937. Zhang Ailing went back to Shanghai in 1929, and attended St.Maria's Women's College in 1937-1939. In 1939 she went to study at the University of Hong Kong. She returned to Shanghai in 1942 after the fall of Hong Kong and established herself as a writer with stories in journals such as *The Cosmos and Heaven and Earth*.
- 44 *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing* p.94
- 45 *Long Live Youth (qingchun Wansui 青春万岁)* was first planned to be published by China Youth Publishing House in 1957, but because of Wang Meng's downfall in the Anti-Rightist campaign, the novel was not published until 1979.
- 46 高文池, 陈慧忠, p.11

- 47 Originally, Wang Meng titled his story: *A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department* (组织部来了个年青人). See the original reference from "On 'A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department'" by Wang Meng, People's Daily, May 8, 1957.
- 48 *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century*, p 208
- 49 *Introduction in Selected Works of Wang Meng*, p. iiv
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 *Introduction in Selected Works of Wang Meng*, p. iiiv
- 52 *Selected Works of Wang Meng*, p 369
- 53 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 4 p. 302
- 54 Ibid., p.303
- 55 *Selected Works of Wang Meng* pp. 362-369
- 56 Ibid.,
- 57 Ibid., p. 367
- 58 Ibid., p. 368
- 59 王蒙王干对话录: 文学这个魔方一节, 漓江出版社, 1992
- 60 *Kite Streamers* is one of Wang Meng's most interesting stories, which defends the right of young lovers to find a place where they can be together in private in the city's overcrowded apartment blocks.
- 61 *Voices of Spring* is notable not only for its references to German (the title refers to a Strauss waltz popular in China) and its richly detailed descriptions of contemporary life, but also its skilful use of metaphor in portraying the China of the 1980s as a train where travellers are jammed into a boxcar hitched to a brand-new diesel engine.
- 62 *The Uses of Literature*, Perry Link, p. 39
- 63 Zhuang Zi (庄子) is a famous philosopher in ancient China, who lived around the 4th century BC. The Taoist book *Zhuang Zi* (《庄子》) of the same name is believed to have been written by Zhuang Zi and others. One phrase from the book that has been popularized is the idiom "Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly" (庄周梦蝶 *zhuang zhou meng die*) from the chapter "*On Arranging Things*" (齐物论 *qi wu lun*, the second part of the book). The idiom originates from the event that one night, Zhuang Zi dreamed that he was a carefree butterfly, flying happily. After he awoke, he thought that maybe he was actually a butterfly dreaming that he was a person. It hints at many questions in the philosophy of mind and epistemology, such as Descartes' famous question of how one knows one exists.
- 64 Lao Zi (老子) along with Zhuang Zi, is a defining figure in Chinese Taoism. According to Taoist tradition, he is said to have lived in his mother's womb for 70 years and been born white-haired. He became a

historian in charge of the archives of the State of Ch'u, but retired to the mountains in the West after observing the onset of decline in the land. At the frontier, the gate-keeper begged him to write down his teachings, so he wrote the *Tao Te Ching*. After his departure, legend has it, he was never seen again.

65 尽管有一些评论文章如在《<世纪之交的冲撞——王蒙现象争鸣录>》一书中，作过评论说：王蒙的小说“蝴蝶”是受庄子《齐物论》中的《庄周梦蝶》的启迪和影响。但是，王蒙自己在他：《我的文学追求——“蝴蝶”为什么得意》一文中却这样写道：我的一篇小说取名蝴蝶。我很得意，因为我作为小说家就像一个大蝴蝶。你扣住我的头，却扣不住腰。你扣住腿，却抓不着翅膀。你永远不会像我一样地知道王蒙是谁。

66 *用笔思考的作家*，夏冠洲著，新疆大学出版社，1996，p. 37

67 *Selected Works of Wang Meng* p. 402

68 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3 p. 130

69 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3 pp. 314-344

70 *Introduction in Selected Works of Wang Meng*

71 Originally, this line is from a Tang Poem by a woman called Li Shangyin (李商隐 813-858). Wang Meng uses the first line as the title of his story and the story begins with the poem. It reads:

*Hard on them to meet; harder to part: such is love.
All flowers wither away without warmth enough.
A silk-worm exhausts its silk-threads, before it dies;
A candle gutters on, till its tear-drops run dry.
Before a mirror, at morn, they fear—
Their black hair becoming gray too soon.
In their night-time groans, moonlight appears—
As coming from a cold and callous moon.
The place, where she lives, is not a far cry.
May, between him and her, the blackbird ply!*

Wang Meng Collection Vol. 3 p. 314

72 <<中国当代文学概论>> p.117

73 参见：王蒙王干对话录：文学这个魔方一节

74 *中国现代小说史*，中国人民大学出版社，1984，p.110

75 Maria Galikowski & Lin Min, *Wang Meng's "Hard Porridge" and Reform in China* in *New Zealand Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 1 1993, p. 95

76 *Introduction* in Zhu Hong's translation: *The Stubborn Porridge and Other Stories*, George Braziller, New York, 1994. p.1

77 Maria Galikowski & Lin Min, p.95

78 王蒙，*我是王蒙* 一书中的第六章：我的文学追求 pp.202-203

王蒙在这一章节还写到：1988年7月底，我去北戴河休假，除写了<<球星奇遇记>>以外，还写了<<坚硬的稀粥>>，回京后觉得后者有些粗造，便放了一段时间。后逢<<中国作家>>编辑催稿，对<<坚>>润色后于1988年12月给出。这碗<<粥>>，就发表在1989年第二期<<中国作家>>上。……这是一篇幽默讽刺小说，其中有对人民内部的一些缺点，弱点的嘲讽。批评的主要矛头直指食洋不化，全盘西化，追逐时髦，盲目幼稚而又大言不惭的“儿子”，同时，小说也批评了偏于保守的“徐姐”，不敢负责的“爸爸”，侈谈民主而又脱离实际的“堂妹夫”以及这一家人多争论而不善行动的弱点。从这些内容上，得出的结论只能是作者呼唤一种健康的，实事求是的，建设性的态度，只能说明作者的思想观点在当时早与全盘西化，侈谈民主，不问国情的那一大胆“赵括谈兵”划清了界限，而不可能是相反。至於作品中的“爷爷”，是一个宽厚，慈祥，开明，从善如流的人物。……尤其要指出的是，小说的基调是光明的，小说人物在闹一些小笑话的同时，正处於欣欣向荣，蒸蒸日上，生动活泼，欢乐向前的气氛中。他们在一些小纷争的同时，有着一一种和睦亲切的人情味，他们在表现出某些天真幼稚的同时，又展示了对於新鲜事物的兴趣，他们在有点乱轰轰的同时，又显示了父慈子孝，亦信亦义的家庭伦理的温暖。小说结尾处实际上已经解决了膳食维新问题，叫做“鸡鸭鱼肉蛋奶糖油都在增加”同时还要“加吃稀饭咸菜”——稀饭咸菜本来就不应该是消灭的目标，稀饭咸菜本来就不是改革的对象。……小说的风格是轻松的幽默与讽刺。小说用来一些政治名词，既反映了政治名词大普及的事实也体现了小题大词的反差的幽默性，小题大词，大题小词，这是语言艺术特别是喜剧艺术中常见的修辞手段。也说明了作者写这篇作品的事候心情轻松，胸怀坦荡，决无草木皆兵，藏头露尾的阴暗心理，决无含沙射影，指桑骂槐的动机与行动。

79 Introduction in Zhu Hong's translation: *The Stubborn Porridge and Other Stories* p.6

80 This book is an essay style based and including most of the research papers and articles published by Wang Meng in 1990.

81 Ibid.

82 Perry Link, *The Use of Literature: life in the socialist Chinese literary system*, Princeton University Press, 2000, p.128

83 王蒙1992年年出版了长篇小说<<恋爱的季节>>，这是“季节”系列长篇小说的第一部。1994年<<失态的季节>>，1995年<<踌躇的季节>>，1999年<<狂欢的季节>>。夏冠洲在*用笔思考的作家*一书中写到：“王蒙1992年发表半自传体系列长篇小说之一<<失态的季节>>，被评论界视为‘新状态小说’代表作。” p. 2

84 A debate over “humanistic spirit” in literature unfolded in the pages of *Reading (Dushu 读书)*, China's leading magazine for intellectuals. Wang Xiaoming, Zhu Xueqin, Zhang Rulun, and Chen Sihe, who began it (*Dushu* 1994.3.3-13), argued that humanistic spirit was valuable but in serious decline. The “Search for a Conception of Humanistic spirit” continued in issues 4 through 7, 1994, of *Dushu*. In late issues (no. 6 and 8, 1995) Wang Meng, Li Hui, and Cheng Jiangong countered.

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- 85 In the afternoon on 12 July 1994, Wu Muding , a Germany professor interviewed Wang Meng at Wang's residence in Beijing. This quotation is based on the tape of that interview and the published form in Chinese can be found in the book: 王蒙现象争鸣录---世纪之交的冲撞 Ed. by Ding Dong & Sun Min, Published by Guang Ming Daily Publishing House, Beijing, 1996, p. 220
- 86 Ibid., p.220
- 87 Ibid., pp.220 -221
- 88 *Introduction in Chinese Literature : In the Second Half of a Modern Century – A Critical Survey* edited by: Pang Yuan Chi & David Der-Wei Wang, Indiana University Press 2000 p. xxxviii
- 89 *Fiction: Exploring Alternatives in The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century*, pp.368-370
- 90 *Introduction in Chinese Literature : In the Second Half of a Modern Century – A Critical Survey* p. xxxvii

Chapter Two

Paradigms of Realism in *Wang Meng's*

The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department

怀念50年代的生活种种对于我们这个年纪的人确实是一件美好的事情。

--- 王 蒙

It is a wonderful thing for people of our age to recall life in the 1950s.

---- Wang Meng

In 1952, at the beginning of China's First Five-Year Plan (第一个五年计划), Wang Meng eagerly applied to take the university entrance examinations. He wanted to study architectural engineering so that he could take his place on the front line of national reconstruction. From an early age Wang Meng was equally fond of literature and science. He was greatly influenced in the early 1950s by the novel *Number One Profession* (第一个职务), which was written by the Soviet author S.P. Antonov.¹ Because of that book, the sight of a building going up exerted an irresistible attraction on him.²

Wang Meng's application to study architectural engineering, however, was not approved and his wish to move to the forefront of things and put up buildings did not come true either. Thus, he became eager to try and break into a new realm: "... he was often in the grip of nostalgia--he had a wistful fondness for his comrades in the Party underground and the young people who threw themselves

into revolutionary struggles around the time of Liberation, fighting ardently to build a new life.”³

Just outside the courtyard of the Communist Youth League District Committee where Wang Meng worked was a Xinhua Bookstore (新华书店) outlet, where he often went to inhale the fragrance of printers' ink. He would stroll up and down through the forest of books, lingering in front of them, heedless of time. He hoped one day that his own book - his own heart - would be displayed there. So he decided to write a story, which he called *Long Live Youth* (青春万岁).

One evening late in the autumn of 1953, in a small, new two-story building near Beixingqiao⁴ (北兴桥), Wang Meng, a nineteen-year-old Communist Youth League cadre, harboured a fervent secret desire. He closed the door of the tiny sunless room that served him as both office and sleeping quarters, and by lamplight began writing one line after another on a pad of unruled white paper. Beside him files, unfinished reports and summaries, had accumulated in stacks; if someone were to knock at the door, he was ready to grab a report manuscript and put it on top of his writing pad, making it look like he was spending all night on materials connected with his job. Worried about failure and ridicule as he began his writing career, he suffered from the notion that “his abilities were inferior to his ambitions.”⁵

Nevertheless, as he sat at his desk and took up his pen, he realized that he was engaged in something that would influence the course of his entire life. Wang Meng sensed a kind of sacredness, a solemnity, and was deeply conscious of his efforts to record the beautiful though swiftly passing existence--to give shape to burning and elusive passions. He felt sincerely that, though “he might capture only the tiniest fraction of the rich variety of real life, it was

still a crystallization of ardent emotions, a lustrous glow from life, an imprint of youth; and that it was more enduring and comprehensible to people at large than the events of life themselves.”⁶

The novel that Wang Meng was writing was a simple narrative of student life, with all its naïve idealism. The story is set in the early 1950s and describes how a group of senior school students band together to help the daughter of a former capitalist and the adopted daughter of a foreign missionary to overcome the disadvantage of their backgrounds and to devote themselves to the new Chinese state. The story was a message from the heart that would not change with time or weaken with distance. Moreover, Wang Meng came to see that “a writer was the happiest of people, able to understand others and be understood by them; to speak from the heart with thousands upon thousands of friends; never alone, always together with the multitudes, building an entirely new, wonderfully happy, decent and abundant life.”⁷

The story Wang Meng had written was *Long Live Youth*. It took him a whole year before he gave the manuscript to Pan Zhiding, general Secretary of the Literature Study Centre (文学研究中心), which came under the Chinese Writers' Association (中国作家协会). Pan wrote him a letter praising his talent, at the same time giving the manuscript to the Youth Publishing House (青年出版社). In September 1955 Xiao Yemu⁸, editor-in-chief of the Youth Publishing House, and the veteran writer Xiao Yin had a talk with Wang Meng, affirming the basic value of the story but giving suggestions for revision. While Wang Meng was waiting for feedback on *Long Live Youth*, he wrote the short story *Little Bean*⁹ (小豆儿), and sent it to the journal, *People's Literature* (人民文学), where it was published in the September issue.

The publication of Wang Meng's first story was not a happy occasion for him, because he discovered that one third of the story had been cut, and the title had been changed. He wrote a scathing letter of inquiry to People's Literature, after which one of the editors, Ge Luo, met with him, much to Wang Meng's embarrassment, and explained in great detail why such changes were necessary.

In early 1956, Wang Meng published another short story, *Spring Festival*¹⁰ (春节), and Mr. Xiao Yin helped him get a six-month writer's vacation. In April of that year he took part in the National Conference of Young Writers. (全国青年作家大会) After the conference, Wang Meng wrote a short story, *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department*. (组织部新来的青年人) He couldn't have realised it at the time, but it was a piece that was to catapult him into the literary limelight, with all the accompanying dramas and dangers of what that meant in China in the 1950s.

Historical Background

The establishment of the People's Republic of China was declared on 1 October 1949. The first step in mobilising writers and artists to support the new regime in Beijing was taken in July 1949 with a congress of 824 representatives of literature and the arts.¹¹ Its importance was underlined by the participation of prominent politicians including Mao Zedong (毛泽东) and Zhu De (朱德); the main address was given by the new premier-designate, Zhou Enlai (周恩来), who urged the writers to adhere to the principles laid down in Mao's 'Yan'an Talks'¹². The main purpose of the congress was to approve the establishment of the Chinese National Federation of Writers and Artists (中华全国文学艺术界联合会¹³) and the

appointment of Guo Moruo¹⁴ (郭沫若) as president, flanked by Mao Dun¹⁵ (茅盾) and Zhou Yang¹⁶ (周扬) as vice-presidents. Guo Moruo and Mao Dun were there by virtue of their contributions to poetry, drama and fiction, as well as their prominence in the literary societies of the 1920s and 1930s. The real power in the Federation was held by Zhou Yang, whose literary contributions were limited to translations and some early poems, but who had been the chief organisational force in the League of Left-Wing Writers (左翼作家联盟), in the Lu Xun Academy in Yan'an (延安鲁迅艺术学院), and in the Party's Department of Propaganda (宣传部).

The Federation's organ, the Literary Gazette (文艺报), was edited by Ding Ling¹⁷ (丁玲), and well-known writers like Ba Jin¹⁸ (巴金) and Xia Yan¹⁹ (夏衍) were given official positions as the Federation established branches in other cities in China. Nominally an autonomous body promoting the interests of writers and artists of all kinds, it was one of the chief means of control over literature and the arts, and its senior officials reported directly to the Department of Propaganda.²⁰ Affiliated to the Federation were the professional associations: the Chinese Writers' Association (中国作家协会), the Chinese Dramatists' Association (中国戏剧作家协会), the Chinese Film Artists' Association (中国电影艺术家协会) and the like, each with its corps of full-time administrative officers, editorial staff and salaried professionals. The Writers' Association, for example, published People's Literature (人民文学) and Poetry (诗刊) at the national level. Writers found employment in newspapers and journals which were published directly under the control of the Party's Publication Bureau (新闻总署), while others taught or held administrative posts in schools and universities throughout the country.

Many of the May Fourth writers had fought some three decades for a left-wing government and were eager to try out their ideas on a national platform. Holding joint appointments in senior government and bureaucratic posts meant they were placed in policy-making positions. On 1 October, 1949, Mao Dun was appointed Minister of Culture (文化部长) and Guo Moruo, Director of the Cultural and Educational Commission (文化教育委员会); non-Party writers like Ba Jin were appointed to the People's Political Consultative Committee (政协委员会). Most of the older writers confined themselves to administrative and ceremonial duties. As a consequence, literature of the early 1950s was left in the main, to younger writers, many of whose careers were launched in Yan'an and whose works, almost without exception, were optimistic and didactic: common themes included Land Reform (土地改革) and the 1950 Marriage Law (婚姻法).²¹

For those writers and artists who harboured uncertainties about the new era, the early 1950s brought a succession of thought reform and political study sessions. Literature and the arts were a rich source for political education. For example, in 1951, the Literary Gazette criticised the film *The Life of Wu Xun* (武训传) for its glorification of its hero, Wu Xun, a Qing dynasty educationalist. Wu Xun came from a poor background but was famous for begging for donations from the ruling classes to educate the poor. According to the film's critics, Wu Xun lacked resolve in class struggle, and the rich and powerful should not have been depicted as willing to help the poor. Mao Zedong's intervention in a letter to the People's Daily (人民日报) in support of the criticisms led to a campaign against the film.²²

Political campaigns involving criticism and self-criticism sessions on the Yan'an model appeared to be an effective mechanism for remoulding the ideological outlook of wavering intellectuals and

other subversive elements in society. 'Brain washing' (洗脑) was regarded as a peculiarly vicious aspect of Communist rule. Economic success in the early stage of Communist rule led to continued efforts on the ideological front, and a four-volume Selected Works of Mao Zedong (毛泽东选集) was published in 1953 to provide the correct orientation. The chief document for writers was the 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and the Arts' (在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话), as guidelines for all writers and all readers in the new society. (From the early 1950s until the early 1980s, this text was used to intimidate or condemn writers and had more weight than government policy or law, so that the history of literature in this period became defined in terms of departures from the 'Talks'.)

Intellectuals who longed for more autonomy and better living conditions were heartened by political relaxation in the Soviet Union in spring 1956, following Khrushchev's (赫鲁晓夫) denunciation of Stalin (斯大林). The Chinese leadership deliberated briefly on the response to the Soviet thaw, and Mao seized the opportunity to undermine the trend towards professionalization in the bureaucracy and the arts which had been of growing concern to him. In a speech on 2 May, 1956, Mao proposed a policy of supporting diversity in literature, theatre, scholarship and thinking generally, under the attractively traditional slogan, 'Let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred schools of thought contend' (百花齐放, 百家争鸣). Despite misgivings from those who saw China's future in efficient modernisation, the new strategy was announced two weeks later by Lu Dingyi²³ (陆定一), the head of the Propaganda Department, in the form of a political campaign in which intellectuals were encouraged to speak their minds and explore new ideas. The Hundred Flowers campaign gathered momentum in the remainder of 1956 and early 1957. With respect to literature, it implied that while the Yan'an guidelines (指毛泽东的在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话) were still in

force, politics was not the sole criterion for the assessment of literary works. In November 1956, a ten-day conference was held in Beijing by editors of journals to decide on what they should do in response to the new environment.

The Hundred Flowers debates were conducted chiefly through the Party's own journals, which offered the greatest diversity of opinion since the Party was founded.²⁴ Qin Zhaoyang²⁵ (秦兆阳), brought in as editor of People's Literature to liven up the journal, set the tone with his September 1956 article, '*The Broad Road of Realism*' (现实主义--宽广的道路). In the article, Qin claimed that literary critics had become political watchdogs, with power and influence going to those who could best use slogans and labels to oppress others. He suggested that 'Socialist Realism', the Soviet formula for politically conventional writing which had been adopted in China, should be replaced by 'critical realism' to reflect changing realities (that is, to question aspects of Party and government policy and its implementation). As examples of critical realism, Qin Zhaoyang published stories by the young writers Wang Meng and Liu Binyan (刘宾雁). Hence, Wang's *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department* faced the reading public for the first time, sharing the same issue of People's Literature with Qin Zhaoyang's article. The story immediately became controversial.

A Synopsis of the Newcomer Story

The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department was the most controversial of all Wang Meng's early works. Like Liu Binyan, another promising young writer in China at that time, Wang Meng seemed set to become important on the Chinese literary scene, only to fall victim to the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. (Wang

Meng wrote only one other short story, '*Winter Rain*' (冬雨), before being labelled a Rightist.) The *Newcomer* story is similar to Liu Binyan's reportage in its criticism of inertia and incompetence in the Communist bureaucracy. Through the conflict between the newcomer, Lin Zhen (林震), and the Deputy Bureau Chief, Liu Shiwu (刘世吾), the story highlights the tensions between younger and older cadres and the differences in the way they carry out their work.

The *Young Newcomer* is a simple, short story, which revolves around the figure of Lin Zhen, who is a newly appointed cadre at the District Party Committee. His fellow committee members include Zhao Huiwen (赵慧文), the organization department secretary, Liu Shiwu (刘世吾, 世 in Chinese means *world* and 吾 means *I*. From this name people can get the implied meaning of 'I am the world' or 'The world belongs to me), first deputy director, Han Changxin (韩常新), chief of the factory Party building section, and the person to whom Lin Zhen is directly answerable, and Wang Qingquan (王清泉), factory director and Party branch secretary. When Lin Zhen first arrives, he is young and idealistic, full of hope and enthusiasm. Very soon, however, his previous assumptions begin to be undermined: "He had sacred visions of the life of a Party worker based on the images of the omnipotent Party secretaries in the movies. But when he came into contact with the busy and confident leading comrades, saw the coming and going of documents and convening of meetings, heard those sharp quarrels and profound analyses, he blinked his light brown eyes and was a little afraid."²⁶

There is an air of "intense and serious"²⁷ activity in the District Party Committee, and meetings are constantly held, which go on well into the night. But there is a sense that very little concrete is actually achieved. Instead, everybody chats, reads newspapers, and cracks jokes.

Lin Zhen is especially alarmed at the realization that all is not well with the factory director, Wang Qingquan, whom he encounters at the Tong Hua Gunny Sack Factory (通华麻袋厂). Wang is busily playing chess when Lin Zhen enters his room, and barely raises his head to look at the young new cadre when replying to Lin Zhen's queries. Lin later learns from Wei Heming (魏鹤鸣), the serious and conscientious production chief at the gunny sack factory that "Wang Qingquan had worked in a central ministry, but as punishment for his involvement with some woman, he had been transferred to this factory in 1951 as deputy director. In 1953, he replaced the director, who was assigned elsewhere. He did nothing except make his rounds after a hearty meal, hide in his office, approve papers, and play chess. At monthly meetings of the Party branch, the Union, and the Youth League, he would make a speech criticizing the inadequate carrying out of mass competition among the workers, the indifference to quality, and the capitalistic ideology."²⁸

Wei Heming responds with cynicism to Lin Zhen's suggestion that Wang Qingquan should be reported to the higher levels of leadership. Han Changxin, Lin's immediate superior, is unsympathetic to Lin Zhen's indignant, reporting back of the incident, stating that: "You don't understand the overall situation and it's not your job to solve the problem of Wang Qingquan. Frankly, it will take a more experienced cadre to do that."²⁹

With Lin's encouragement, Wei Heming and other disgruntled workers get together and write a letter to the Beijing Daily (北京日报) about the problems within the organization department. The newspaper publishes the letter, calling for an investigation into the "bureaucratic style"³⁰ of Wang Qingquan. This galvanises Liu Shiwu into action, and within a week, Wang is "dismissed from both his Party and administrative positions."³¹

At a follow-up meeting, Lin Zhen declares that he feels it is Han Changxin and Liu Shiwu who are responsible for allowing Wang Qingquan's unacceptable behaviour to continue for five years, but his comments seem not to be taken seriously by the District Party Secretary. When after the meeting, Han and Liu ask him to have a walk with them as though nothing has happened; he crumples inwardly, finally admitting to himself that “he was no match for them.”³²

The story ends as an ambiguous note, with Lin Zhen, though perplexed by all the recent events swirling around him, telling himself to be “more active, more enthusiastic, but above all, stronger.”³³ The final sentence has Lin Zhen knocking at the door of the Party leader's office, but for what purpose, or with what consequences, we are not told.

Theoretical Background

In order to evaluate Wang Meng's work in the 1950s, as epitomized by his *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department* story, we need first to look at the concept of realism and its two theoretical offshoots, social realism and Socialist Realism.

A.) Realism

Primarily under the direction of the Maoist literary line, the mode of realism was propagated as playing the leading role on the Chinese literary stage from 1949 on. Realism was not, of course, a new theory in China at that time, but had been the main mode of literary discourse for many prominent writers from the May Fourth period. The important position of realism in Chinese fiction from the 1920s, right up to the 1980s, is undeniable. “It has even been argued

that both Chinese and Western scholars have regarded realism as ‘the crowning achievement’ of modern and contemporary Chinese literature.”³⁴

The term “realism”, as it is defined in the West, is applied in two different ways. It is associated with a movement in 19th century fiction, primarily the novel, in which the problems of ordinary people in unremarkable circumstances are rendered with close attention to the details of physical setting and to the complexities of social life.³⁵ More importantly, however, it points to a wider tendency in fiction to represent human life and experience in a manner which faithfully “reflects” or “reproduces” real life.³⁶

Realism was first used as a literary term in France, where it was applied to literary and visual forms which aim for the accurate reproduction of the world as it is. In general, it means the use of the imagination to represent things as common sense supposes them to be.

19th-century novels are often described, from a 20th-century perspective, as classic realist texts; the world of the novel is presented to the reader as if it were a direct mirroring or reflection of the real world, rather than an ideologically saturated interpretation of the real. The term most often used to describe the strategy of the realist text is transparency. The illusion of transparency created by realism is contrasted with modernist writing which supposedly foregrounds its textuality.

Realism is also used in modern literature in opposition to what is regarded as sentimentalism-the disposition to represent feelings as nicer than we know them to be; an illogical extension of this use of the term is sometimes to apply it to literature that represents experience as nastier than we know it to be. Finally, realism in literature is sometimes related to nominalism, *i.e.* the realist writer is he who represents individuals

rather than types; in this sense, modern literary realism is the opposite of the realism of medieval philosophy.

“Realism” can be a somewhat misleading term. It carries the connotation of a methodology rooted in verisimilitude, that is, a “detailed accuracy of description”, whilst at the same time more generally rejecting “idealization, escapism, and other extravagant qualities of romance” in favour of analysing the actual problems of life.³⁷ “Realist” fiction is therefore constructed so as to give the effect that it is representative of the social world familiar to the reader. The “realist” writer is obliged to render his or her material in such a way as to make it seem to the reader “the very stuff of ordinary experience.”³⁸ “Realism” may be interpreted not as a mirror held up to life, but as a fictive construct taking on the appearance of a “faithful reproduction” of reality—an artificially created “slice of life”.³⁹

Russian Formalists, and, following them, structuralist critics, have argued that “realism” is constructed from a system of literary conventions producing a “lifelike illusion” of some “real world” existing outside the text.⁴⁰ Due to its reliance on literary conventions—e.g. processes of selection, exclusion, description and manners of addressing the reader—“realism” is perhaps best viewed as an artificial form rather than the transparent reflection of life its adherents suggest.

When the term “realism”, as one of several western literary theories, was first introduced to China, it was translated as “写实主义”, which basically means to *write truth*. However, in reality, especially in literary works, nothing can be described as totally true. Since this literary term became more popular among Chinese writers in the 1920s, scholars in Chinese revised the old translation, and began to use “现实主义”.⁴¹ The first edition of the Chinese dictionary *Cihai*, which was published in 1936, started to use the term “现实主义”, rather than the old version of “写实主义”. Since then, all

publications in China have followed the example of *Cihai*, and use “现实主义” as the official translation of the term “realism”.

The Chinese dictionary *Cihai* (辞海) provides a definition of “realism” that subscribes to the traditional Western view that advocates the objective observation of real life, meticulously describing the true picture of what actually happens in life.⁴² Paraphrasing comments made by Engels in 1880s on “realism” in fiction, the definition continues by stating that apart from truthfulness of plot, “realism” also demands the “reproduction of typical characters in typical circumstances.” The reference to Engels accords “realism”, or at least the Chinese definition of it, the ideological “correctness” of the Marxist literary line. The *Cihai* definition also asserts that examples of “realism” may be found in traditional Chinese literature: the odes of the *Shijing* (诗经), the poetry of Du Fu, and Cao Xueqin’s novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (Honglou meng 红楼梦).

Officially sanctioned surveys of Chinese literary history published since 1949 have singled out the development of “realism” in the post-May Fourth period as the main trend in modern Chinese literature. Although literature of the 1920s and 1930s was marked by a push towards a “conquest of the widest possible area of reality”, “realism” was not the only literary form in evidence.⁴³ More importantly, modern Chinese literary “realism” was not the unified movement so often depicted. It was, at best, a “narrative domain”, presumably one that was not all-encompassing.⁴⁴ While there can be no doubt that Lu Xun was the “originator” of a modern Chinese realist discourse and that his greatest contribution lay in the fact that he “managed to assimilate 19th century European realism to Chinese narrative formats,” the development of “realism” in the 1920s is not so clear-cut.⁴⁵

Mao Dun was probably the critic and author “most responsible for” the propagation of Western-style “realism” in China.⁴⁶ Mao Dun’s novels of the late 1920s and early 1930s married the structural elements of the 19th century realist novel with the sociopolitical demands of a writer at the spearhead of a literary revolution.⁴⁷ Mao Dun was also instrumental in founding the Association for Literary Studies, whose advocacy of “realism” in post-May Fourth period points to a deeper agenda on the part of the Communist literary authorities. As a Marxist and a Chinese Communist Party member, Mao Dun’s fiction was imbued with a political propaganda, a kind of “realism” of commitment as it were. This was precisely the type of “realism” the authorities wanted to propagate. Other modern “realist” writers such as Lao She, who subverted the real with “melodramatic tears and hysterical laughter,”⁴⁸ or even Shen Congwen, whose vision of the real was tempered by lyricism, did not appear as committed to the Marxist cause.

The Chinese interpretation of the Marxist literary line determines that “realism” is the preferred-and therefore the “correct”-mode of literary creation. This same interpretation demands that the representation of reality portrayed in literature cannot be regarded as “ideologically neutral” or “value free”.⁴⁹ To address this problem, “realism” in the Chinese context is generally modified by a preceding adjective depending on its location in the chronological order of the revolution.

Mao Zedong’s “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” of May 1942 consolidated the interpretation of the Marxist literary line and laid the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party’s policy towards literature. The central issue of the “Talks” was the ability of “realism” to show progressive social evolution, and the suitability of “realism”, when defined by the concerns of Marxism, to represent socialist society.⁵⁰ Through the dictates of the “Yan’an Talks”, Mao’s interpretation of the Marxist literary line became the

only doctrine of official artistic expression in China for four decades. Chinese literary criticism from the late 1940s until at least the early 1980s is founded very much in accordance with the criteria of the “Yan’an Talks”. Mao’s particular interpretation of the Marxist literary line provided the ideological framework within which all literary workers, including critics, were to operate. It was the responsibility of the critic to interpret literary texts along the “correct” ideological lines so that the reader would be better aware of the message implicit within the text. The critic’s duty was arguably one of political rather than artistic interpretation.

B.) Social Realism

Social realism, as an offshoot of realism, is a term mainly used in art criticism since World War Two, referring to pictures which treat ‘real life’ subjects in a way that challenges the values of ‘bourgeois’ society. It generally realistically depicts the life and environment of the lower classes, and focuses on subjects of social and political conditions, such as poverty and deprivation. Those painters described as social realist may practise in a variety of styles, not necessarily realistic in the sense of creating an exact likeness, but share an attitude or a wish to confront social injustice.

In arts and literature, social realism is the truthful, objective and unpartisan depiction in literary works of society not only as it actually exists, but also exposes and criticises the dark side of the society and shows some of its ambiguity and contradictions. Its main forms have been ‘documentary novels’, ‘faction’ plays and films, war poetry. One of Lu Xun’s most famous stories *New Year’s Sacrifice* and Lao She’s most well-known play *Tea House* are good illustrations of this kind of literary work. Social realism is distinct from Socialist Realism.

C.) Socialist Realism

Socialist Realism traces its origin to the Soviet Union. In its place of birth, the role of literature and art was redefined in 1932 when the newly created Union of Soviet Writers proclaimed this theory as the compulsory foundation for all literary practice. Socialist Realism prescribed a generally optimistic picture of socialist reality and of the development of the Communist revolution. Its purpose was education in the spirit of socialism. Its practice is marked by strict adherence to party doctrine and to conventional techniques of realism.

“Socialist realism”, as it was adopted in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, was introduced as a Marxist form of “realism” set up in opposition to “critical realism” (or what we might call “social realism”). It represented society in a positive light, presenting a vision of society as it ought to be according to Socialist principles, rather than as it actually was. Abrams offers a concise definition of “socialist realism”:

In its crude version, it [socialist realism] was a term of approbation applied mainly to novels which adhere to the Communist party line, and emphasize the oppressions by bourgeois capitalists, the virtues of the proletariat, and the felicities of life under socialism.⁵¹

Throughout the 1950s China’s leading literary theoretician Zhou Yang promoted Soviet socialist realism as “the road ahead for Chinese literature.”⁵² Socialist realism derives its vitality from the depiction of real life.⁵³ On the other hand, in the 1950s, the detrimental effects of conceptualized formula writing had prevented writers in China from “intervening in life”. (干预生活)⁵⁴ Instead, as one scholar mentioned, “they have intended hymns of praise that served to embellish reality. Because praise of this sort was false and contrived, it lacked power to move the reader. We need works of

literature in praise of life. But writers must meet one prerequisite: writing the truth. They must be entirely convincing.”⁵⁵

These were the circumstances and the background for Wang Meng to produce his work, the *Newcomer* story. Having identified the broad content of these three concepts, we can go on to examine to what extent they applied to Wang Meng’s work *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department*.

An Analysis of the Young Newcomer Story

Subsequent to the publication of *Young Newcomer*, although many literary critics defined Wang Meng’s 27,000-word short story as “Socialist Realist,” a discussion arose around it that revealed the inadequacy of this simplistic interpretation.

A well-known veteran revolutionary writer, Liu Shaotang, in his 1957 article *Writing the Truth: the Essence of Socialist Realism* commented: “Comrade Wang’s story, ‘*The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department*,’ has drawn a tremendous response from general readers, as well as from our literary and artistic circles, because of the author’s strict adherence to the realities of life. The story serves as a stimulus to those who want to change all that is wrong or undesirable in our society. It hurts those who are failing or have failed, those who regard life with unseeing eyes and who, perhaps with good intentions, pretend that all is well.”⁵⁶

Here, Liu began to place Wang Meng’s story into the realism basket based on his claim ‘*because of the author’s strict adherence to the realities of life.*’ Certainly readers can find, at various junctures in the story, many details resonate as being at least partially true in our

daily life. The following illustration appears at the beginning of the second chapter of the story:

There are twenty-four cadres in the organization department, including Lin Zhen. Three were on temporary assignment to the office for suppression of counterrevolutionaries, one was working part-time because of his college entrance exams, and another was on maternity leave. Of the remaining nineteen, four did cadre work and fifteen were in charge of party recruitment work in factories, schools and offices.⁵⁷

组织部的干部算上林震一共二十四个人，其中三个人临时调到肃反办公室去了，一个人半日工作准备考大学，一个人请产假。能按时工作的只剩下十九个人。四个人作干部工作，十五个人按工厂，机关，学校分工管理建党工作。

Through Wang Meng's approach to characterization, which he regards as the central aspect of his story, he presents his key protagonists largely as believable people, with real human attributes, rather than as the revolutionary stereotypes generally associated with Socialist Realism. For example, Lin Zhen's first meeting with Zhao Huiwen:

Scrutinizing his bed, Zhao Huiwen shook her head disapprovingly like an older sister and said: "Young man, you really have no sense of cleanliness. Look at this pillowcase; it's nearly black! The top of the blanket is full of dirt from your neck. And the shirt, full of creases, just like ruffled cloth. . ."

Lin Zhen was happy that the moment he had entered the gate of the District Party Committee to begin his new life, he had met a very warm person.⁵⁸

赵慧文端详着林震的床铺，摇摇头大姐似的不以为然地说：“小伙子，真不讲卫生；瞧那枕头布已经由白变黑；被头呢，吸饱了你脖子上的油；还有床单，那么多折子，简直成了泡泡纱……”

林震觉得，他一走进区委会的门，他的新的生活刚开始，就碰到了一个很亲切的人。

Zhao Huiwen, the secretary of the organization department, is one of the young, positive characters in the story. We notice that Wang Meng tries to portray her as a real person, by using a number of devices. One is to bring out her human emotions, whether it is nostalgic longing, regret, caring, etc. One Saturday night, after Han Changxin's wedding ceremony, Zhao and Lin Zhen have a chat at Zhao's place:

Zhao Huiwen leaned against the wall, hands behind her back, oblivious to the whitewash rubbing off on her dress. She waited until the end of the music and said: "That is Tchaikovsky's 'Capriccio Italien.' It makes you think of the south, of the sea. I used to listen to it when I was in the Cultural Ensemble. After a while, I felt as if the music wasn't performed by someone else but sprang from inside me. . ."

"You were in the Cultural Ensemble?"

"I was assigned to it after being in the Military Cadre School. In Korea, I sang for the troops in my poor voice. I'm a hoarse-voiced singer."

Lin sized up Zhao Huiwen as though seeing her for the first time.

"Why, don't I look like a singer now?" she asked. The radio began a live broadcast of a play and she turned it off.

"Why don't you sing anymore?"

She did not reply but went over to the bed and sat down.⁵⁹

赵慧文背着手靠在墙上，不顾衣服蹭上了石灰粉，等这段乐曲过去，她用和音乐一样的声音说：“这是柴可夫斯基的<<意大利随想曲>>，让人想到南国，想到海……我在文工团的时候常听它，慢慢觉得，这调子不是别人演奏出的而是从我心里钻出来的……”

“在文工团？”

“参加军事干部学校以后被分配去的，在朝鲜，我用我的蹩脚的嗓子给战士唱过歌，我是个哑嗓子的歌手。”

林震像第一次见面似的又重新打量赵慧文。

“怎么？不像了吧？”这时电台改放“剧场实况”了，赵慧文把收音机关了。

“你是文工团的，为什么很少唱歌？”林震问。

她不回答，走到床边，坐下。

Here Wang Meng vividly describes Zhao not just as a revolutionary stereotype cadre, but as a real person. The conversation continues between the two:

Zhao Huiwen became excited. She threw off the pillow and said: “I deal with general office affairs; the leading cadres seldom ask about it. I have some personal problems, so I became quiet. I go to work; copy and write, and I wash diapers and buy powdered milk when work is over. I feel I’m growing old very fast. My enthusiasm, the dreams I had at Military Cadre School—they’ve flown away, who knows where!”⁶⁰

赵慧文也有些激动了，她把枕头抛开，她说：“我做的是事务工作，领导同志也不大过问，加上个人生活的许多牵扯，我沉默了，于是，上班抄抄写写，下班给孩子洗尿布，买奶粉。我

觉得我老的很快，参加军干校时候那种热情和幻想，不知道哪里去了。”

In the passage above, Wang Meng brings out Zhao's real human side not only by revealing her emotions, but also by associating her with the everyday details of normal life, like washing diapers and buying powdered milk for her child. Her concerns do not revolve solely around “making revolution,” but also the routine threads that make up the fabric of human life. Zhao is the motherly type, and shows great solicitousness towards the young and naïve Lin Zhen:

“Zhao Huiwen suddenly went out and left Lin alone in her large but empty room. Soon, Zhao returned, carrying a long-handled pot, skipping like a girl.” She raised the lid and said to Lin dramatically: “Water chestnuts—boiled chestnuts! I couldn't find anything else good to eat.”

“I have liked boiled water chestnuts since I was a child,” said Lin happily.⁶¹

赵慧文突然推门出去了，把林震一个人留在这空旷的屋子里。马上，赵慧文回来了，端着一个长柄的小锅，她跳着进来，象一个梳着三只辨子的小姑娘。他打开锅盖，戏剧性地向林震说：“来，我们吃荸荠，煮熟了的荸荠！我没有找到别的好吃的。”

“我从小就喜欢吃熟荸荠，”林震愉快地说。

Having said that Wang Meng incorporates elements of realism into his *Newcomer* story, one or two critics, most notably Qin Zhaoyang, place Wang's story in the “critical realism/social realism” camp. Qin commented in his ‘Broad Road’ article: “Realism differs from other theories in that it enables the writer to face reality positively, to seek the truth of life, and to seek artistic truth and originality in order to reflect and affect life as much as possible. Thus,

the world of realism is much broader than that of other artistic theories. Writers may have different ways (critical realism) of reaching truth, but their direction is the same and they reach the same destination: the truth of life.”⁶²

Can we, in fact, find examples to back up Qin Zhaoyang’s assertion? The answer is yes. In this story, Wang Meng identifies a hidden disease in certain “patients.” If such “patients” hold leading posts in Party or government organs, the hidden disease will, to varying degrees, exercise a negative influence over Party life, social life, and the work of the state. Careful reading reveals several instances of an exposé-type approach, such as Wang’s negative portrayal of the gunny sack factory Party director, Wang Qingquan, who chases women, plays chess during office hours, orders his colleagues around, and slams doors as he leaves rooms. A dialogue between Lin Zhen and Wei Heming in Chapter 3 can be arguably regarded as the author trying, to some extent, to expose the dark-side of bureaucratic structures. In his description, Wang Meng takes the approach of not necessarily a realistic presentation, in the sense of creating an exact likeness, but in terms of wishing to confront social injustice.

“You see the kind of person he is?” Wei Heming whispered.

“Don’t just grumble,” Lin Zhen said. “You can criticize him, or tell the higher levels about all this. They can never allow this sort of factory director.”

...

“Criticism doesn’t work,” Wei said. “He simply doesn’t go to Party meetings, so where are you going to criticize him?”

“What about telling the higher levels?”

“I wrote letters in 1954 to the Ministry of Textiles and the District Party Committee.”

“Tell the upper level again,” Lin urged.

“I don’t know how many times I talked with Han Changxin. Han not only took no notice of my complaint, but lectured me on respect for leadership and strengthening unity. Maybe I shouldn’t be thinking this, but I’m afraid we may just have to wait until Wang embezzles funds or rapes a woman before the upper levels take any real notice.”⁶³

魏鹤鸣嘟哝着：“你看他怎么样？”

林震说：“你别光发牢骚，你批评他，也可以向上级反映，上级绝不允许有这样的厂长。”

魏鹤鸣说：“批评不动！他根本不参加党的会议，你上哪儿批评去？”

“向上级反映呢？”

“一九五四年我给纺织工业部和区委写了信”

“你再反映呀！”

“后来与韩常新也不知说过多少次，老韩也不答理，反倒向我进行教育说，应该尊重领导，加强团结。也许我不应该这样想，但我觉得也许要等到王厂长贪污了人民币或者强奸了妇女，上级才会重视起来！”

Later, when Lin Zhen falls foul of Wang Qingquan, the latter bitterly complains about Lin to Li Zongqin, the deputy secretary, who darkly threatens “we’ll see to it that [Lin Zhen] gets the education he deserves.”⁶⁴ (‘至于林震’我们会给予应有的教育的。)

It also needs to be pointed out that the story contains a certain degree of ambiguity and contradiction. One example can be found in Chapter 5. The first several days of his time at the organization department, Lin Zhen “was unable to say clearly whether his new

environment was good or bad. Just as in elementary school, he arose every morning to work with his barbells; and he still gave people the impression of “purity,” even of “naivete.” But he was turning things over his mind much more than in elementary school. Lin had to learn how to judge everything and everyone.”⁶⁵

Another example of this kind of ambiguity or confused feelings can also be found in Chapter 9. After Lin Zhen had a meal with Liu Shiwu at a small restaurant, he came home and “sat on the edge of his bed. He felt the wet cuffs of his pants and felt sad, very very sad. He could not explain his sadness. He saw the beautiful but pale face of Zhao Huiwen. He was only a young fellow, inexperienced and uninformed. It was sad, sad. . . . He went over to the window and put his face against the wet, icy glass.”⁶⁶

Contradictions appear several times in the story; a typical example is a description of a Party meeting held at the District level. Lin Zhen tries to speak like a big brave man, but at the same time is almost in tears, like a child.

“I hope you will not confine yourself to just making a cool, well-rounded analysis—“Lin butted in audaciously but was unable to continue for fear he would burst into tears.”⁶⁷

林震以不知从哪儿来的勇气对李宗秦说：“我希望不要只作冷静而全面的分析. . . .” 他没有说下去他怕自己掉下眼泪来。

Lin Zhen often feels a sense of indecision, perplexity and confusion as his old ideals are undermined. He is regularly unable to “decide [what] was right.”

Shao Yenxing, a literary commentator and theorist in the 1950s, published an article titled *Curing Sickness with Bitter Medicine* in Literary Studies in 1957. He mentioned: "It is the duty of a doctor to cure sickness and save the patient's life. However, there are patients who hide their sickness because they are afraid of treatment . . . I have seen this situation on various occasions when Wang Meng's story, '*The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department*,' was discussed."⁶⁸

The contradictions Wang Meng exposes in the story are between the new and the old, the advanced and the backward, the positive and the negative factors in the Party, and between that which propels society forward and that which drags it back. The contradictions present themselves in a very complicated way and sometimes are so concealed that it is difficult to grasp them. However, these contradictions exist, contrary to the view of some people that the only contradiction is between the old and new cadres and between the young and their elders. Some readers might believe that the story praises the younger generation too much. According to Shao Yenxing, this is a misunderstanding. He defends Wang in his article thus: "It is the author's prerogative to choose anyone to be the hero in his works, presenting two sides in contradiction, and showing his love or hatred, provided the author is not divorced from the realities of life."⁶⁹

After looking at realist and social realist elements in the *Newcomer* story, we can now examine claims that it is, in fact, a piece of Socialist Realism.

The official organ of the Communist Youth League Literary Studies (文艺学习) published forty critiques of the story between December 1956 and February 1957. The paper announced that within a four-month period it had received over 1,300 manuscripts, a number

of which accused the story of distorting the Party organization and the image of veteran Party cadres.

The harshest criticism came from Li Xifan in “*Criticism of ‘The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department’*”⁷⁰ (评‘组织部新来的年轻人’), published in Shanghai’s Wen Huibao (文汇报) in February 1957. He asserted that Wang Meng had distorted and exaggerated social phenomena. Li’s remarks touched off a great response. Li made an analysis of the “petit-bourgeois sentiments” in the story but underrated the significance of its antibureaucratism. What is more, Li, in his article, did not fully realize that the contradiction and confusion in the portrayal of the characters and backgrounds reflects some true facts. Instead, he listed, exaggerated, and distorted what is partial and unrealistic in the story, concluding that the typical environment in Wang Meng’s story distorted the society and that Wang Meng had branded the leading cadres of all ranks as bureaucrats.

Li takes some original sentences and phrases from Wang Meng’s story to condemn him, such as: “Some people have no interest in holding meetings to ratify the admission of new members.” In the “awesome” Party organ of the District People’s Committee, there is a “report for instruction” as thick as a book and bearing a very lengthy title. The husband of Zhao Huiwen is “oily”. Some veteran Party members who are politically decadent do not work but have their names on the payroll, etc. Li claims that all these observations are groundless and Wang Meng’s “hidden spearhead” almost “goes beyond the scope of criticism” in its “political and artistic effect.”⁷¹

At the end of February 1957, Chairman Mao Zedong gave a speech at the Supreme State Conference (最高国务会议) entitled “*On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People*” (关于正确处理人民内部矛盾), in which he called for a further relaxing of

control over public expression and again encouraged the Hundred Flowers movement. During the speech, Mao referred to Wang Meng's '*The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department*'.⁷² From then on Zhou Yang, who had also condemned Wang's story at first, reversed his previous position and praised Wang Meng as a model of a Socialist Realist writer.⁷³ Zhou's close associate, Lin Mohan (林默函), vice-director of the Communist Party's Propaganda Department (中宣部副部长), published "*A Story That Causes Controversy*" (一篇引起争论的小说) in the March 1957 issue of *The People's Daily*. Lin affirmed that the story, though flawed, still had positive meaning. He stated that its critics had a tendency toward dogmatism, brusqueness, and arbitrariness in making their judgements, all of which betrayed the direction of the Hundred Flowers movement.⁷⁴

However, another well known literary figure, Kong Jue⁷⁵ (孔厥), then published another article in the same month as Lin's, but in the journal of *Literary Studies*, titled: *A Contradictory Story* (一篇充满矛盾的小说). In his article, Kong argued that: "The author must stand on top of life and reveal the correct direction. This is an invariable law of life in our era for dealing with the various problems; it is also the principle of socialist realism in literature. A unique feature of our life in this era is that problems that could not be solved in the past can be solved today. The principle behind our realism is that the direction the old school of realism failed to find can be found by us. If a writer can only depict life enthusiastically but fails to find the direction to solve problems, how can he make a complete reflection of truth in our life? And how can his writings be regarded as socialist realism?"⁷⁶

Surely this comment is not totally true. According to the definition of Socialist Realism, the author should look at life from a consciously socialist viewpoint in order to be better able to grasp and portray reality. As a matter of fact, Wang Meng displays peoples'

enthusiasm and their high revolutionary spirits during China's high tide of socialist construction in his story.

Work in the District Party Committee was intense and serious. In the secretary's office, meetings went on far into the night⁷⁷.

...

...

Beijing entered the high tide of socialism. Workers, store clerks, even capitalists were all coming to the District Party Committee to report good news, letting off firecrackers and beating drums. Lots of them sent applications for party membership directly to the organization department. The main streets looked different every day. The whole District Party Committee was ablaze with light through out the night; cadres from the finance and propaganda departments talked all through mealtime about various things happening during the high tide of socialism.⁷⁸

区委会的工作是紧张而严肃的，在区委书记办公室，连日开会到深夜。

...

...

北京市进入社会主义高潮，工人，店员还有资本家，放着鞭炮。打着锣鼓到区委会报喜，工人，店员把入党申请书直接送到组织部，大街上一天一变整个区委彻夜通明吃饭的时候，宣传部，财经部的同志滔滔不绝地讲着社会主义高潮中的各种气象。

Several characters voice sentiments, often urging on political rhetoric, that very much reflect the prevailing ideology, in line with the requirements of Socialist Realism.

A comrade in the Centre has noted that organizational work is like the housekeeping of the Party. If the house isn't well cared for, the Party loses strength." He went on without waiting for questions. "What do we do to the house? We develop the Party and consolidate it. We augment the Party organization and enhance its fighting power. We build Party life on the basis of centralized leadership, criticism, and close tie with the masses. If we do this well, the Party organization will be solid, lively, with the power to fight. The Party will be capable of leading the masses in fulfilling better and better the task of socialist construction and transformation. . ." ⁷⁹

中央的一位同志说过，组织工作是给党管家的，如果家管不好，党就没有力量。然后他不等问就加以解释：“管什么家呢？发展党和巩固党，壮大党的组织和增强党组织的战斗力的，把党的生活建立在集体领导，批评和自我批评与密切联系群众的基础上。这样作好了，党组织就是坚强的，活泼的，有战斗力的，就足以团结和指引群众，完成和更好地完成社会主义建设与社会主义改造的各项任务.....”

According to Kong, what Wang Meng portrayed is just what happened by chance. He agrees that the story reveals bureaucratism, and Wang Meng does give a vivid portrait of Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen. But he insists that the author has not analysed his characters dispassionately and does not bring out their merits fully and even does not correctly point out their shortcomings. Kong blames the author, on the contrary, for joining Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen in confusing their good and bad points, taking all to be good.⁸⁰

Interestingly, in a supposed article of self-criticism which Wang Meng actually turns around into a subtle justification, Wang himself admitted that: “When I began to write this story, I had two objectives in mind. First, I wanted to portray characters with flaws in

their nature so as to reveal the negative aspects of our work and life. Second, I wanted to raise the question of Lin Zhen's situation: If a young man is enthusiastic in opposing bureaucratism but encounters considerable difficulty in his 'struggle,' where can he turn?"⁸¹

As we can find in this article, in creating his characters and their complications, Wang Meng showed he had an "understanding of them up to a certain point and was able to express this understanding."⁸² He did not, however, "manage a clear analysis and evaluation of their natures."⁸³ During the process of writing his story, Wang felt as if he "were raising certain problems which [he] was incapable . . . of solving."⁸⁴ The literature of realism encompasses actual life and all literary possibilities. Since life is broad and rich, the perspective, content, and style of the literature of realism can be very broad and rich according to the author's ability to know and portray life artistically. If literary realism limits the author in any way, it is in how far and how expertly he is allowed to go by the limitations of life, art, and the author's own capability.

In the *Newcomer* story, Han Changxin is appropriately depicted for the negative character he is. Chinese readers generally disliked this kind of individual. He poses as a capable young man with some work experience. He is very good at teaching his subordinates lessons and criticizing writers and literary works, while being able to stand occasional criticism from his superior Liu Shiwu. He skilfully demonstrates his new leadership position soon after his promotion to deputy director. Wang Meng has not so much dramatized as described these characteristics, but as for how Han listens to Lin Zhen's first report on the factory, how he presents himself as a model in writing up a work report, and how he tries to convince Lin with his example—all this is convincingly and powerfully portrayed. For instance, in the last scene, Lin Zhen is perhaps a little overenthusiastic; he should not have looked for Han Changxin so impatiently during the lunch break. But then Han disparagingly treads on Lin's zealous enthusiasm. He picks

his teeth, shows pride in being able to grasp the situation, and ostentatiously gives Lin lessons about principles.

After lunch, Lin Zhen hurried to report to Han Changxin on the situation. Han was leaning wearily against the back of his sofa. His large form looked heavy and clumsy. He took out a matchbox from his pocket and, selecting a matchstick, began picking his teeth.

Lin poured out a disconnected account of what he had seen and heard at the gunny sack factory. Han tapped his foot on the floor, saying, "Yes, I know." Then he gave Lin a pat on the shoulder and said cheerfully: "Well, if you failed to understand the conditions there the first time out, it doesn't matter. Next time you will do better."⁸⁵

吃完午饭，林震迫不及待地找韩常新汇报情况。韩常新有些疲倦地靠着沙发背，高大的身体显得笨重，从身上掏出火柴盒，拿起一根火柴剔牙。

林震杂乱地叙述他去麻袋厂的见闻，韩常新脚尖打着地不住地说：“是的，我知道。”然后他拍一拍林震的肩膀，愉快地说：“情况没有了解上来不要紧，第一次下去嘛。下次就好了。”

It is meaningful to expose Han Changxin, the bureaucrat. This is a clear-cut character; even the young and naïve Lin Zhen understands what sort of individual Han is soon after meeting him.

Han Changxin was quite different from Liu Shiwu. He was twenty-seven and wore a blue serge navel uniform so clean that shaking it would not remove a speck of dust from it. He was robust, with a handsome and heroic-looking face blemished by

pimples. Patting Lin on the shoulder, Han explained in a sonorous voice, broken with uncontrolled laughter, what Lin's duties were. Lin thought, "He's more like a leading cadre than a leading cadre." This impression was reinforced by the way Han talked the next day with a member of a Party branch in charge of organization.⁸⁶

韩常新的风度与刘世吾迥然不同。他二十七岁，穿蓝色海军呢制服，干净得抖都抖不下土。他有高大的身材，配着英武的只因为粉刺太多而略有瑕疵的脸。他拍着林震的肩膀。用嘹亮的嗓音讲解工作，不时发出豪放的笑声，使林震想：“他比领导干部还像领导干部。”特别是第二天韩常新与一个支部的组织委员的谈话。加强了他给林震的这种印象。

During a meeting, Wei Heming is discussing production matters, but Han interrupts him, asking him about the workers' "shortcomings" He then asks Wei "how the Party activists had done their production tasks for the quarter, showing particular interest in figures and concrete examples. As for how the advanced workers overcame difficulties and developed innovations, he did not even want hear about it."⁸⁷

People of this type are shallow, arrogant and snobbish. They do not take the needs of the country and the policies of the Party as a guide line for their work. They fashion certain principles out of the instructions from, as well as the likes and dislikes of, the people above, and use these as their guide, in order to promote their own positions. There is no place in their minds for the Party and the people and for the tempering and cultivation of the self: instead, they are concerned with change when they should be changeless, and with changelessness when they should change. Thus if they are not exposed by the people and the Party, if they are temporarily successful, they seem to be ever new,⁸⁸ capable of coping with every situation.

The main merit of the story, however, lies in its analysis of Liu Shiwu. He is the chief character of the work, and is very colourful and vivid. He is the number one deputy director of the organization department of a certain District Party Committee in Beijing, a cadre who occupies a fairly high position although he is not exactly an old Party member. Because of the author's unique portrayal of him, his image stands out. Liu had a history of heroic struggle while young and enthusiastic. He is experienced, capable, cultured, and decent. He has keen sight and a brilliant intellect. He is used to hard work: he can put aside some documents and zero in on others. At key moments, he can change the situation by his shrewd remarks. As the occasion demands, he can make weighty remarks showing principles or remarks that are exceptionally sharp, witty, humorous, or even lyrical. He can snatch leisure from his packed schedule to play chess and read literature. He even goes so far as to chat with his young subordinate cadre in a small restaurant and pour out his own wonderful and simple dreams, such as his desire to be a gardener.

As Lin was leaving, Liu stopped him and asked in a different voice, "Well, do you have a girlfriend, little Lin?"

"No. . ." Lin flushed.

"A big boy like you still blushes?" Liu Shiwu smiled broadly. "Well, you're only twenty-two. No hurry." Then he said, "What's that book in your pocket?"

Lin Zhen took out the book and read out the title: *The Tractor Station Manager and the General Agronomist*.⁸⁹ Liu took the novel and read a few lines. "Is this recommended by the League Centre for you young fellows to read?"

Lin nodded.

"May I read it?"

"Do you have time to read novels?" Lin Zhen looked at the big pile of papers on Liu's desk, amazed.⁹⁰

当林震推门要走的时候，刘世吾又叫住他，用另一种全然不同的随意神情问：“怎么样，小林，有对象了没有？”

“没……”林震的脸刷地红了。

“大小伙子还红脸？”刘世吾大笑了，“才二十二岁，不忙。”他又问：“口袋里装着什么书？”

林震拿出书，说出书名：拖拉机站站长与总农艺师

刘世吾拿过书去，从中间打开看了几行，问：“这是他们团中央推荐给你们青年看的吧？”

林震点头。

“借我看看。”

“您有时间看小说吗？”林震看着副部长桌上的大叠材料，惊异了。

Liu Shiwu acts as a kind of foil for Han Changxin. Liu is, though, in the story, not a perfect model, who still clearly outshines Han in every respect, especially in terms of his dealing with office business. Every time Lin Zhen talked to Liu, Lin was taken aback by the circuitous but sharp, prominent thrust of his words. As for the questions to which Lin needs urgent solutions, Liu usually gives two contradictory answers: “Wait until the conditions are ripe,” and “The main thing is accomplishments, not shortcomings.”⁹¹ When Lin Zhen expresses criticism at meetings, Liu makes a few abstract and ambivalent remarks of approval. Then he takes a drastic turn and indignantly counterattacks. He is fully aware of Han Changxin’s defects but praises him occasionally. In this way, he skilfully floats on top of life and handles everything with strong self-confidence. After all, he sees that “that’s all there is to it.”⁹² Liu works by relying on his “genius” alone. However, whenever the conditions for “an operation” (行动) are ripe, he forcefully and determinedly solves the problems he kept unsolved. And the operation always comes out rather well: only after that, he relapses into his old ways with more self-assurance than ever.

The literature of realism has its own criteria, but when we seek these criteria, we must not forget the basic premise of realism stated earlier. We must judge this literature by seeing whether it achieves a true portrait of life and a depth of thought when the author has tried to mirror objective reality. On December 16, 1956, the Beijing Daily carried an article by Li Qimin, a staff member in the organization department of East No.4 District in Beijing (from May 1950 to 1956, Wang Meng was working in East No. 4 District Working Committee of the Beijing Youth League as a deputy secretary), entitled “*The Applicants Are Looking Forward to Admission Day and Night, While Authorities Are Taking Their Time.*”⁹³ The case cited in the article is a footnote to Wang Meng’s story.⁹⁴ There are also details in the story which a reader with experience cannot read without feeling that they are identical with his own experience. All this proves that the author has drawn his theme to the last details from the rich experience of life.

Liu Shaotang pointed out in his article: “Wang Meng does not misrepresent the Party organization in his story. He presents all that happens with truth and accuracy. He does not present Liu Shiwu and Han Changxin in the story as comic figures; nor does he ennoble them.”⁹⁵ Because Wang Meng does not distort the real situation, these two characters emerge as entirely convincing and believable. He does not characterize them as some unbelievable negative types who leave no impression on the reader other than contempt. Wang Meng’s characters are of the sort that induce the reader to reflect deeply.

As for Lin Zhen, the chief character in the story, Wang Meng does not lend him the characteristics of a complete hero, or a person of superhuman capabilities. With the beautiful, romantic yearnings of the young, and a genuine confidence in and loyalty to the Party, Lin Zhen enters the District Party Committee. However, he encounters unexpected difficulties, obstacles, and misery. He struggles, but with a young man’s fervent love of the Party and the people; he lacks the

capacity to analyze the events and people around him. But he has direction and confidence, for he derives his strength from the Party. He continues to search and think to the very end of the story.⁹⁶ Although he is gradually approaching maturity, he still needs education and assistance. His first experience in love reveals him to be all the more youthful and unsophisticated.

The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department is a moving story not only because it has artistic appeal as a short piece of fiction, but also because it would have made the contemporary reader think about many problems present and future. This is where the story succeeds. Wang Meng has managed a bold portrayal of characters such as Lin Zhen and Liu Shiwu; Han Changxin and Zhao Huiwen, in the story. Wang Meng does not misrepresent the Party organization in his story. He presents all that happens based on his observation of ordinary life. Readers cannot expect Wang Meng, in the story, to portray one Party organization in terms of our concept of the Party as a whole; if he did, it would become formula writing. Only when a literary work tries to portray life in all its complex dimensions will it have artistic vitality and appeal. Wang Meng pointed out in his own 1957 article *On 'A Young Newcomer Arrives at the Organization Department'*: "I had too much confidence in my own aesthetic sensibilities. In relying on these sensibilities, I believed that I could manage a faithful and daring portrayal of a variety of characters and contradictions in life. I felt that this was the best thing I could do for the readers. Since life is richer and more vivid than any set of theories, and since it is possible that certain contradictions in life have yet to be analysed by the writers of Marxist classics or the Party Centre, a writer may therefore be unable to offer a clear analysis of these contradictions himself. I thought it better courageously to portray the truth and allow readers to arrive at their own conclusions."⁹⁷

It is, perhaps, unsurprising that many Chinese scholars classified Wang Meng's fictional work of the 1950s as Socialist Realist. To some extent, such an appraisal reflects merely the one-dimensional approach to literary criticism that characterised the first three decades of the PRC (i.e. if one approved of something, it was automatically given the label "Socialist Realist", regardless of whether or not it actually comfortably fit in the Socialist Realist basket). And Wang Meng certainly was, and still largely is, committed to the leftist cause; his expose of bureaucratic inefficiency in the Party organization was not in order to oppose the system, but to enable it to operate better. The *Newcomer* is surely not a story of "condemnation." Wang Meng exposes the problems of the ideology and quality of certain Party members that cause problems in life and work of the Party. Through the characterization of Lin Zhen, Wang enables the reader to see the contradictions between the old and new in life and to seek the means to solve such problems. His youthful passion and idealism with regard to the leftist agenda clearly comes through in his early work, thus, perhaps, leading literary theorists to confirm it as Socialist Realist in nature.

This chapter reveals, however, that it is too simplistic to categorise Wang Meng as only a Socialist Realist writer, as his early works also incorporates elements of realism and social (or "critical") realism. It is a mark of the man that he refuses to be limited by any one "ism." Though perhaps taking a particular theoretical paradigm as his starting point, he reveals his literary skill in his predilection for and his ability to modify that paradigm, or to mix and match paradigms, in order to serve his creative purpose. It is a measure of the literary complexity of Wang Meng's work, and is the reason why it is difficult or inappropriate to classify his work only in terms of a single literary category.

Notes

- ¹ 这是指前苏联作家安东诺夫的描写建筑工人生活的小说[第一个职务]，参见夏冠洲的“用笔思考的作家”新疆大学出版社，1996，p. 26
- ² Wang Meng's *Autobiographical Note – My “Overall Situation”* in *Selected Works of Wang Meng* Vol. 1, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China, 1989 p. 372
- ³ Ibid., p. 373
- ⁴ Beixingqiao [北兴桥] is the name of a place in the suburbs of Beijing.
- ⁵ Wang Meng's *Banished to Xingjiang—or, About Bestial Hatred of Literature*, 1980 p.54
- ⁶ 夏冠洲, p. 27
- ⁷ Qin Zhaoyang's early comments on *Wang Meng's New Novel*, Literary Studies, No. 3, 1957
- ⁸ Xiao Yemu (萧也牧) regarded Wang Meng as one of the most promising young writers of the era and gave great support to Wang's literary endeavours in the 1950s and 1960s.
- ⁹ *Little Bean* has simplicity of language as befits a young girl, from whose point of view the story unfolds. The protagonist, together with her brother and mother, uncovers two KMT spies in the persons of her father and the father's close friend. This short story is regarded as Wang Meng's first officially published literary work.
- ¹⁰ 小说[春节]是表现一位青年在爱情遇到波折后的自慰和奋起的故事。这篇小说带有明显作者自叙的色彩，以至终于打动了远在太原读书的女友的心，最后获得了美满的爱情，遂成王蒙爱情史上的一段佳话。参见 万象 1995年第一期王蒙夫人崔瑞芳女士的文章：无力抵挡。
- ¹¹ This conference was held from 2 July to 29 July 1949 in Beijing.
- ¹² 'Yan'an Talks' here refers to '*Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and the Arts*' (在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话), made by Mao Zedong in May, 1942
- ¹³ '中华全国文学艺术界联合会'是全国文学艺术团体的联合组织。简称'文联'。成立于1949年7月。在1953年9月第二次全国代表大会上改名为：'中国文学艺术界联合会'，会址设在北京。
- ¹⁴ Guo Moruo (1892-1978), studied in Japan, where in 1921 he was a founding member of the literary group, the Creation Society. An influential poet in the Romantic style then new to China, he also wrote several plays on historical themes and characters. Well-known as a palaeographer, translator and autobiographer, Guo was a high-level cultural functionary in China.

- 15 Mao Dun (pseud. of Shen Yanbing, 1896-1981) a critic, novelist and short-story writer noted for his commitment to the doctrine of realism. Born in Tongxiang, Zhejiang Province, he was admitted to the pre-college class at Peking University in 1913; and upon his graduation in 1916, he was employed at Commercial Press in Shanghai. Inspired by the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, he took part in the May Fourth Movement in China. In 1920, he joined the Shanghai Communist Team, and helped to establish the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. Between 1921 and 1932 he was one of the chief editors of China's foremost literary journal "Xiaoshuo yuebao" (小说月报 Short Story Monthly). He went to Japan in July 1928 to take refuge when he was wanted by the Nationalist Party cracking down on the Communists. After his return to China in 1930, he was invited to be a member of the League of Left-Wing Writers. He was active in the War of Resistance against Japan beginning in 1937. He served as minister of culture from 1949 to 1965. His works include, "The Manifesto of Short Story Monthly," "On the Proletarian Art," "Disillusion," "Rainbow," "The Shop of the Lin Family," "Spring Silkworms," "Autumn Harvest," and "Midnight."
- 16 周扬 (1908 – 1989) 文艺理论家。1930 年从事左翼文艺运动。1932 年历任中共左翼作家联盟党团书记，中共上海中央局文委书记兼文化总同盟书记，《文学月报》主编。1937 年抗战爆发后，离开上海到延安，任陕甘宁边区教育厅厅长，鲁迅艺术文学院院长，中央文委委员，延安大学校长，华北联合大学副校长。解放战争时期任中央晋察冀中央局、华北局宣传部部长。中华人民共和国成立后，历任中共中央宣传部副部长、文化部副部长兼党组书记，中国文联副主席，中国作家协会副主席。“文革”中被关押 9 年，后平反，任中国社会科学院副院长兼研究生院院长，中国文联副主席、主席、党组书记，中国作协副主席、顾问，中共中央宣传部副部长、顾问。1955 年被聘为中国科学院哲学社会科学部委员。是国务院学位委员会第一副主任，中国民间文艺研究会副主席、主席、名誉主席，中国美学学会名誉会长，全国政协第三至五届常委，中共第八届中央候补委员、十一届中央委员、中纪委常委、中顾委委员。长期担任党的宣传和文艺组织的领导工作，是无产阶级革命文化运动的先驱者之一。同时从事文艺理论创作介绍、宣传、贯彻马克思主义的文艺理论和毛泽东文艺思想。撰有《表现新的群众的时代》、《我国社会主义文学艺术的道路》、《坚决贯彻毛泽东文艺路线》、《三次伟大的思想解放运动》、《关于马克思主义的几个理论问题的探讨》等数百篇理论文章；出版有《周扬文集》（5 卷本）、《周扬序跋集》、《周扬近作》等。
- 17 Ding Ling (1904 – 1986). On arrival at the liberated base area in 1936, Ding Ling was personally welcomed by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. Among the positions she assumed, the most important were as head of the Chinese Literature and Arts Association and editor of the literature and arts supplement of Liberation Daily. She wrote short stories, reportage and polemical essays before 1949. Ding Ling became one of the major targets at the Yan'an Forum for her dissident views in her 1942 essay "Thoughts on March Eight". Ding Ling's fame and prestige were restored with her novel *The Sun Shines over the Sanggan River* and it won a Stalin Prize for Literature in 1951 and was translated into many languages. Over the next few years, Ding Ling held numerous official posts, like editor-in-chief of both the *Literary Gazette* and *Peopl's Literature* and she exerted considerable power on the formation of the new literary canon in China in the early 1950s. As such she posed a threat to Zhou Yang's faction, and was criticised in 1955 as a leader of an anti-Party clique. Ding Ling resumed political life as a vice-chair of the Writers' Association in 1979. Her active political engagement and the scandals attached to her life and works have both contributed to her standing as China's most mafous woman novelist.

¹⁸ Ba Jin (1904 -). Ba Jin is the pen name of Li Feigan and it is generally accepted that the name Ba Jin is a composite of the transcriptions into Chinese of the first syllable of Bakunin and the last syllable of Kropotkin. Ba Jin was influenced by these two Russian anarchists during his youth and translated a number of Kropotkin's books while in his early twenties. Ba Jin completed *The Family*, the first novel in his *Torrent* trilogy and his most famous and influential novel in 1931, when he was still only in his twenties. Like the traditional novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *The Family* describes the decline of a large, wealthy family and the dispersal of the younger generation. Ba Jin travelled a great deal during the war years, staying in turn in Guangzhou, Guilin, Kunming, Shanghai and Chongqing, but kept his distance from Yan'an. The second volume in the *Torrents* trilogy, *Spring*, was published in 1938, followed by the final volume *Autumn* in 1940. Collections of essays and short stories also followed, and novella *Pleasure Garden* appeared in 1944. Two years after this, two of Ba Jin's finest works, *Ward Four* and *Cold Nights*, were published. After 1949 Ba Jin was given important positions in United Front bodies like the People's Political Consultative Committee. Persecuted with ferocity during the Cultural Revolution, he became one of the most highly regarded of the old guard in the 1980s, and was elected to the chair of the Writers' Association in January 1985 and is keeping the position to the present time.

¹⁹ Xia Yan (1900- 1995) started his career as an activist in the May Fourth Movement while a young engineering student in Zhejiang. In 1927, he joined the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai. In 1929, he founded the Arts Troupe and devoted himself to fostering left-wing drama and film. He was a founder member of the League of Left-Wing Writers and primarily responsible for setting up the League of Left-Wing Dramatists.

夏衍(1900—1995) 1924年加入国民党, 开始参加政治活动, 任国民党左派驻日总支部的常委兼组织部长, 1927年四一二事变后被国民党开除党籍, 5月回到上海, 不久即加入中国共产党, 在闸北区从事工人运动, 并翻译大量文艺作品。1929年秋参与筹备中国左翼作家联盟。“左联”成立后被推举为执行委员。1929年翻译了高尔基的名著《母亲》。1929年10月与郑伯奇等人组织上海艺术剧社。1932年进入明星电影公司担任编剧顾问。1933年党的电影小组成立后被任命为组长。此后集中力量从事电影事业, 同时主编左翼戏剧刊物《艺术》、《沙仑》。1935年2月第一次用夏衍的笔名发表短篇小说《泡》, 刊载在《文学》杂志6卷2号。1935年10月重新建立“文委”被选为委员, 分管电影戏剧和音乐。1936年6月创作了报告文学《包身工》, 反映包身工在资本家剥削下的惨痛生活, 引起广泛注意和重视。同年创作了多幕话剧《赛金花》, 发表后曾引起争论。同年12月创作了多幕话剧《自由魂》。1937年发表剧本《上海屋檐下》。1937年8月任《救亡日报》总编辑, 12月离沪, 辗转广州、桂林、香港、重庆等地从事新闻工作, 同时创作了话剧《愁城记》、《心防》、《法西斯细菌》等, 并把托尔斯泰的《复活》改编为话剧。1945年创作的剧本《芳草天涯》, 描写抗战中知识分子的爱情生活, 曾引起文艺界争论。1949年5月随军进入上海, 先后担任文教接管委员会副主任, 上海市委常委兼宣传部长, 上海文化局局长。1954年调任文化部副部长。曾创作《祝福》、《林家铺子》、《革命家庭》、《在烈火中永生》等由文学名著改编的电影剧本。

²⁰ McDougall.B & Louie, p. 199

²¹ Ibid., p.200

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- 22 This paragraph is based on the information from Maria Galikowski's book: *Art and Politics in China*, The Chinese University Press, 1998, pp. 42-44
- 23 陆定一(1906—1996) 江苏无锡人。1925年秋加入中国共产主义青年团，同年冬转为中国共产党党员。1927年5月在共青团四大上当选为团中央候补委员，任团中央宣传部部长。1928年秋，在共青团五大上，当选为团中央委员，并任宣传部部长，主编《中国青年》。1931年，被“左”倾领导人错误地撤销团中央委员、团中央宣传部部长职务。1934年10月参加长征。遵义会议后，任中国工农红军总政治部宣传部部长，主编《红星》报。抗日战争爆发后，历任八路军总政治部宣传部长、八路军前方总部野战政治部副主任，领导《新华日报》华北版的工作。1942年4月，负责编辑《解放日报》的《学习》副刊。同年8月，担任《解放日报》总编辑。1945年，任中共中央宣传部部长。1949年9月，参加中国人民政治协商会议第一届全体会议。中华人民共和国成立后，任中共中央宣传部部长、中央人民政府文教委员会副主任。1954年9月在第一届全国人民代表大会第一次会议上，当选为全国人大常务委员会委员。1956年在中共八大和八届一中全会上，分别当选为中央委员、中央政治局候补委员。在倡导和推行深受中国知识界欢迎的“百花齐放、百家争鸣”方针上，陆定一同志是有重要贡献的。1959年，任国务院副总理。1962年，任中共中央书记处书记。1965年，兼任文化部部长。“文化大革命”中，被冠以莫须有罪名，遭受林彪、“四人帮”反党集团的严重迫害。1979年6月，在全国政协五届二次会议上被增选为副主席。同年9月，在中共十一届四中全会上被补选为中央委员。1980年3月，任中共中央宣传部顾问。1983年6月，在全国政协六届一次会议上当选为副主席。在中共十二大、十三大上当选为中央顾问委员会常务委员。1996年5月9日在北京逝世。
- 24 McDougall.B & Louie, p. 202
- 25 Qin Zhaoyang (1916-) came to fame during the Hundred Flowers campaign in 1956. Appointed as editor of *People's Literature* in January that year to usher in a more relaxed style of writing, he published Liu Binyan's critical reportage '*At the Bridge Site*' in April and '*Confidential Report on Our Paper*' in June, followed by Wang Meng's '*A Newcomer to the Organization Department*' in September and his own 'Silence' in January 1957. Most controversial of all was his essay, '*Realism-The Broad Road*', published under a pseudonym in September 1956, which advocates less control over literature by the Party.
- 26 Wang Meng, *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 4, p.31
- 27 Ibid., p.37
- 28 Ibid., pp. 32-33
- 29 Ibid., p.35
- 30 Ibid., p. 52
- 31 Ibid., p.53
- 32 Ibid., p. 57
- 33 Ibid., p. 61
- 34 Marston Anderson, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in Revolution Period*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 3

- 35 Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991 p. 184
- 36 M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 6th Ed., Fort Worth, Harcourt Brace Jovanoich, 1993, p. 174
- 37 Baldick, p. 184
- 38 Abrams, p.174
- 39 Philip Rice & Patricia Waugh, *Modern Literary Theory*, 3rd Ed., Arnold, Hodder Headline Group, 1996 p. 24
- 40 Abrams, p. 174. Abrams refers to Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect" in Tzvetan Todorov, Ed., *French Literary Theory Today* (1982) as the article where this viewpoint is most succinctly articulated.
- 41 “现实主义” 在中国旧译“写实主义” 或“写实派”，30 年代瞿秋白在<<马克思恩格斯和文学上的现实主义>> (1936 年版<<海上述林>>鲁迅编) 一文把它们改译为“现实主义”，瞿秋白继承了马克思主义的传统，认为现实主义能够反映历史的客观进程，揭示资本主义发展的内部矛盾。除了瞿秋白，30 年代周扬，胡风，冯雪峰等人都曾比较系统地论述过现实主义。
- 42 Cihai, 1979, p.2671
- 43 Jaroslav Prusek, *Reality and Art in Chinese Literature*, in Leo Ou-fan Lee, Ed., *The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1980, p. 3
- 44 David Der-wei Wang, *Fictional Realism in Twentieth-Century China: Mao Dun, Lao She, Shen Congwen*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p.291
- 45 David Wang, p.3. I am heavily indebted to David Wang for the ideas in this and the following paragraph.
- 46 Anderson, p. 33
- 47 David Wang, p.11
- 48 David Wang, p.23
- 49 Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker, *The Dialectics of Struggle: Ideology and Realism in Mao Dun's 'Algae'*, in Theodore Hutters, Ed., *Reading the Modern Chinese Short Story*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1990, p. 53
- 50 Wendy Larson, *Realism, Modernism and the Anti-'Spiritual Pollution' Campaign in China*, *Modern China*, 15.1 (1989), p. 41
- 51 Abrams, p. 176
- 52 Zhou Yang, *Socialist Realism – The Road Ahead for Chinese Literature* *People's Daily*, 11 January 1953
- 53 See 刘少棠1957的评论文章：*真实写作：社会主义的现实主义的基础*, *Literary Study*, No.1, 1957, p. 13

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- 54 “Intervening in life” was one of the expressions coined by certain critics when they debated socialist realism during the Hundred Flowers period (May 1956 – June 1957). To intervene in life meant to study, think over, analyze, and take action in life. Those critics thought that if a writer lived and worked in this way, he would have individual views about life and would not portray a character’s ideological standpoint.
- 55 刘少棠, p. 13
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Wang Meng, *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 4 p. 28
- 58 Ibid., p. 26
- 59 Ibid., pp. 45 – 46
- 60 Ibid., p. 46
- 61 Ibid., p. 49
- 62 Qin Zhaoyang, *The Broad Road of Realism*, People’s Literature, 1956
- 63 Wang Meng, *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 4 p. 33
- 64 Ibid., p. 42
- 65 Ibid., pp.39-40
- 66 Ibid., p.55
- 67 Ibid., p. 57
- 68 Shao Yenxing, *Curing Sickness with Bitter Medicine*, Literary Studies, No. 1, 1957
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Li’s article was published in Shanghai’s Wen Huibao on 9 February, 1957.
- 71 Li, 评‘组织部新来的年轻人’ Wen Huibao on 9 February, 1957
- 72 夏冠洲, *用笔思考的作家*, p. 29
- 73 Nie Hualing, *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, p. 590
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Kong Jue (1916 – 1966), is the pen-name of Zheng Zhi. He trained and worked as surveyor before embarking on a literary career. He went to Yan’an in 1938 and studied at the Lu Xun Academy of Art and Literature. His best-known individual works are ‘*Chairman of the Peasants’ Association*’ (1939), ‘*Miserable People*’ (1942) and ‘*Father and Son*’ (1942). After 1949, Kong Jue was appointed to high-ranking official positions as adviser to the Sino-Soviet Friendship Society and editor at the Central Film Bureau.
- 76 Kong Jue, *A Contradictory Story*, Literary Studies, March, 1957

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- 77 Ibid., p. 37
- 78 Ibid., p. 47
- 79 Ibid., p. 27
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Wang Meng, *On “A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department*, People’s Daily, 8, May, 1957
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Wang Meng, *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 4 p. 34
- 86 Ibid., p. 29
- 87 Ibid., p. 36
- 88 “Ever new” is a pun on the name of Han Changxin: Changxin means “ever new” in Chinese 常新
- 89 *The Tractor Station Manager and the General Agronomist*, a novel by K. Nicholaeva, first published in 1954 in the Soviet Union. A Chinese translation was published in China in 1955 and enjoyed great popularity. The novel concerns itself with the positive and innovative spirit of the young in socialist construction.
- 90 Wang Meng, *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 4 p. 27
- 91 Ibid., p. 47
- 92 Ibid., p.42
- 93 Shao Yexing, *Curing Sickness with Bitter Medicine*, Literary Studies, No. 1, 1957
- 94 The author said that after he had read Wang Meng’s story, he found exactly what happened in the place where he worked, So he decided to write the letter to the newspaper to report the situation there.
- 95 刘少棠, p. 14
- 96 Ibid., p. 12
- 97 Wang Meng *On “A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department*, People’s Daily, 8, May, 1957

Chapter Three

Narrative Technique in Wang Meng's Stories

有的人喜欢讲写作之苦，我则爱说写作的快乐。

—— 王 蒙

Some people like to talk about the hardships and difficulties of writing, but I like to talk about the joyfulness and happiness of writing.

--- Wang Meng

In post-Mao China, many writers working in the fields of art, film, literature and philosophy posed an uncompromising challenge to traditional forms and ways of thinking. They drew their intellectual inspiration substantially from Western literary and philosophical theories, such as Western Marxism, Freudian psychoanalysis, modernism and post-modernism. Their efforts to bring in a dimension of “otherness” to Chinese literature contributed towards new insights on and inspiration for Chinese social and political life, and the creation of a cultural and political diversity that was fundamentally important for the healthy development of Chinese culture and society.

Wang Meng is among the first few Chinese writers to pay utmost attention to literary technique as a means to break away from the orthodoxy of the politicised and formulaic writing of the first three

decades of the People's Republic of China. This new emphasis on technique represented an initial challenge to the Maoist canon in literature. In the more relaxed climate in China in the late 1970s and early 1980s, imaginative writing took a new turn by breaking into many hitherto "forbidden areas." The result was not only a spate of social exposes, but also increasing attention on the part of some writers to more personal, non-political subjects, such as love, friendship, and the comforts or conflicts of ordinary life. These changes catapulted some Chinese writers like Wang Meng, who are technically inventive, but politically "tame," to official fame; they became the newly established "models" for public adoration.

Wang Meng, who is often cited as the progenitor of the so-called "modernist school" (Xiandaipai 现代派) in contemporary China, published a number of short stories and novellas during 1979 and 1980 which he himself referred to as a "bundle of hand-grenades" (Jishu shouliudan 几束手榴弹) due to their impact in the literary sphere.¹ These works include four short stories and two novelettes. The four stories are: *The Eyes of the Night* (夜的眼), *The Voices of Spring* (春之声), *Kite Streamers* (风筝飘带), *Dreams of the Sea* (海的梦). The two novelettes are: *Bolshevik Salute* (布礼) and *The Butterfly* (蝴蝶).²

The publication of these works, which border on Western stream-of-consciousness fiction, aroused heated discussions and debates at the time in China. Some wholeheartedly embraced Wang Meng's innovation with Chinese narrative forms, others criticized him for deviating from the orthodox "realistic" mode of literary creation, and still others argued that Wang Meng's works belong to the realistic tradition with only a few modern narrative techniques.³ Despite these diverse opinions, one thing is clear: these works looked very different from most of the novelettes and stories in modern Chinese literary history.⁴ They were a new type of

fiction, unfamiliar to Chinese readers, who were for many years isolated from modern Western literature and cut off from the rest of the world. These works kindled Chinese readers' interest in modern narrative technique and have since influenced many younger writers in the post-Mao era. Although the "stream-of-consciousness craze" has long cooled down in China, and Wang Meng himself became more cautious and more conventional in his later works, contemporary Chinese fiction had assumed a new look.⁵ This Chapter mainly attempts to evaluate these six stories written by Wang Meng in the context of modern Chinese literature and to analyse their narrative features with reference to stream-of-consciousness theories and works in the West.

The first impression an ordinary Chinese reader would have upon reading Wang Meng's experimental fiction is that of chaos. "There is no story in it," the reader would complain. Indeed, plot, in Wang Meng's works, has lost its status as the primary element of narrative, which was deemed so important by Aristotle and novelists in the mimetic tradition.⁶ This is, of course, a common feature of the stream-of-consciousness writers in the West. But de-emphasis on plot in fiction seems much more shocking to the Chinese readers than to Westerners. In the West, the rise of the novel as a genre witnessed two tendencies almost from the very beginning. Plotted fiction used to be, and perhaps still is, the main stream of world narrative literature. Even when characterization became the major concern of the late 19th century realistic and naturalistic novelists, plot was still regarded as an important element. Between the two World Wars, however, the use of plot was challenged by modernists, particularly the stream-of-consciousness writers. Virginia Woolf, for example, contended that, since life came like "an incessant shower of innumerable atoms" from all sides into the writer's mind, and since life "is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged," a writer should not attempt to present it in well-plotted fiction.⁷

The history of Chinese fiction, however, does not bear witness to such opposing tendencies. From its origins in the pre-Tang ghost stories to its peak in the Ming-Qing novels, which were divided into chapters, plot was always the most important element in fictional narrative. It was, as a matter of fact, a crucial device in Ming-Qing oral fiction, as it was the only way to attract the audience to the story-teller regularly to learn what followed in the narrative. A chapter in pre-modern Chinese fiction usually ends at a crucial point, a "most pregnant moment" to adopt a term from G. E. Lessing,⁸ in the narrative with the well-known tag: "If you want to know what is to follow, please come to listen to the next chapter."⁹ The May Fourth Movement westernized Chinese fiction considerably, making it more profound in terms of theme and characterization. However, since the major model of May Fourth Chinese fiction was the 19th century European realistic novel, plot was still considered an important element by most Chinese writers.

In view of the fact that the stream-of-consciousness genre in the West has already merged into other trends of world literature and that human external action is still one of the major concerns for writers, Woolf's non-traditional attitude toward plot seems to have proved too radical to be accepted by most readers for long. If Woolf's attitude is a negation of the 19th century tradition, the later merging of stream-of-consciousness with other literary trends is a negation of a negation, to adopt a notion from Hegel.¹⁰ This means that the efforts made by Woolf and other like-minded writers were not lost labour. Robert Humphrey says:

[T]he acceptance of the reality of inner life, of the pre-speech levels of consciousness, as proper subject of fiction is the significant thing for us to notice. If we look, at random, at the work of some of the

*most important mid-century writers, this acceptance becomes obvious.*¹¹

Thus, the significance of the stream-of-consciousness novel as a literary movement does not simply lie in a number of novels that have become classics in world literature, but has, more profoundly, opened a new field of presentation for fiction: the mental processes at the pre-speech level; it has also enriched the repertoire of narrative devices. The stream-of-consciousness genre is, therefore, an important stage in the development of Western fiction.

The Chinese May Fourth Movement, however, did not achieve a similar result. As mentioned above, the major model for the Chinese novelists during that period was 19th century European realistic fiction. They adopted this model chiefly because it is directly concerned with social reality. Traditionally, in line with China's social organization, and the Confucian emphasis on the collective, most literature had to conform to social reality, and, because it was meant to be didactic, it had to be able to speak to the collective as a whole.¹² Also, whilst some May 4th writers wanted to express the inner world of the individual, this became increasingly difficult towards and during the 1930s, as China's situation became more extreme and perilous. And again, when such "big events" like the Anti-Rightist movement and Cultural Revolution were happening, how could a writer ignore them? Their "obsession with China" overshadowed their concern with the inner life of individuals.¹³

Thus, Wang Meng seems to have played a role in the development of fiction in China similar to that of Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, Proust, and others in the West fifty years ago. But, unlike Woolf and Joyce whose works became more and more difficult to read, Wang Meng managed to quickly merge his stream-of-consciousness techniques with more

traditional ones. Therefore, he has himself undergone the process of negation, and that of negation of a negation. Wang Meng may not have won international fame, and his experimental works may not be regarded as classics by later generations, but his influence on contemporary Chinese fiction is immense. Without his experimental efforts to modernize Chinese narrative forms, it would not have been possible for the later, more successful trends to have emerged. These trends include psychic-state fiction like Lu Xing'er's *Blue Birds* and Zhang Xinxin's *On the Same Horizon*, and the Roots' fiction like Li Tuo's *Granny Seven* and Ma Yuan's *The Temptation of the Gangdisi Mountains*. The stream-of-consciousness "movement" initiated by Wang Meng in post-Mao China has proved to later writers that the inner life of individuals is well worth exploring, and that the stream-of-consciousness techniques can achieve what more traditional approaches cannot. It might not be an exaggeration to say that Wang Meng's experimental fiction is a milestone in the development of post-Mao Chinese fiction.

Human consciousness at the pre-speech level is considered to be chaotic, so a stream-of-consciousness work may necessarily be marked by this feature. Nevertheless, a writer must impose some kind of pattern or order on the raw materials if he wants it to make any sense to his readers. Since stream-of-consciousness writers are not chiefly concerned with the physical actions of their own characters, they cannot draw on a traditional plot as a means to achieve the necessary unity. They must, therefore, devise some other means. To see how Wang Meng has achieved unity in his experimental fiction, we will examine his six works in this genre one by one.

The Eyes of the Night is a groundbreaking work in the sense that, through fictional technique, Wang Meng has transformed an ordinary real experience into a nightmarish vision. Despite several contrived

details, including the overworked symbolism of a streetlamp, the story encapsulates this highly subjective vision in a few pages—a brevity of form that matches the temporal brevity of the described experience itself (a few hours in one night). The story starts with a narration of the protagonist, Chen Gao¹⁴ (陈皋), waiting at a bus stop and a description of his impressions of the night scenes in the city. He is on his way to a cadre's home to deliver a personal message from a leader in the provincial town where he has been working. The message is to request some automobile parts, which cannot be procured through official channels. The main concern of the story, however, is not with an exposure of *backdoorism* (走后门) but with a presentation of the protagonist's impressions of and his reflections on urban life after the Cultural Revolution, in comparison with life in a far-off provincial town. Yet there is still a complete plot in this story. Chen Gao's bus journey takes him to the residential compound, where the cadre he is seeking lives. With difficulty in the labyrinth of residential buildings, he manages to reach the cadre's home only to find the host is out. He explains the purpose of his visit to the cadre's son, who immediately rejects his request, for Chen Gao has nothing to offer as bribes but "legs of lamb," which the son says will not do. So Chen Gao leaves without completing his mission. The plot is too simple in itself to hold the reader's interest, and does not itself carry any significant meaning. However, the plot is structurally complete enough to serve as a backbone for the whole work. The unifying factor in this story, therefore, is a unity of actions which have a beginning, a development and an ending. Within this narrative frame, the author presents the protagonist's psychological state and processes.

Similarly, *The Voices of Spring* also has a plot to unify the whole work, but it is even simpler. It begins with the closing sound of a carriage door and the departure of a train. After two midway stops, the

train arrives at the protagonist's destination where he gets off. So ends the story. The protagonist, Yue Zhifeng¹⁵ (岳之峰), is on his way to his native village to visit his father, a former landlord whose bad class status has just been changed. The chief content of the story, however, is the protagonist's impressions of his fellow passengers and his mental associations in the dark "sealed boxcar." Again a simple plot provides a structural pattern for the whole work. Upon this thread, the author has strung a series of mental activities of the protagonist, including a dream scene. Compared with *The Eyes of the Night*, this story hardly has any narration of external actions except for the two midway stops of the train. The hero never leaves his uncomfortable position on the train until he gets off. Nevertheless, the plot is complete enough to serve a structural purpose.

In another story, *Kite Streamers*, Wang Meng tries to achieve a similar effect of impressionistic realism by using a more complex method. *Kite Streamers* is more similar to *The Eyes of the Night* than to *The Voices of Spring* in that it contains many external actions. The setting is again the big city, in which a pair of young lovers are lost; they have nowhere to go for their rendezvous until they stumble into a newly constructed empty high-rise building. The story begins with the young girl waiting for her boyfriend; her reveries lead into flashbacks of their first and subsequent meetings. Halfway through the narrative, he finally shows up, and the two embark upon an almost futile search for shelter—to find a temporary heaven for their love. Wang Meng himself once explained that in this story he uses the “multi-linear, cross-jumping” technique of organization in order to capture the “rapidly changing colours of life.”¹⁶ But the writing is not so complicated, at least to some readers. The temporal scheme is only slightly more “multi-linear” than that of *The Eyes of the Night* and the jerky rhythm does not really bring out a youthful cadence as the author intended. In fact, the characters'

external actions in this story are more obvious and convoluted than those in *The Eyes of the Night*. What is more remarkable about the story seems to be its intimate and emotional tone. While the story unfolds primarily from the young girl's point of view, it is narrated by an outside voice that is close to the mental processes of the young lovers.

Among the four stories under discussion here, *Dreams of the Sea* has the least in the way of a unifying plot. Although it begins with the protagonist's arrival at the seaside and ends with his departure, this plot framework does not have the same kind of unifying effect as in the other three stories. For, while the other stories have plots which last for only a few hours, this one covers several days of the protagonist's life at a seaside sanatorium. The author does not relate his protagonist's activities in a temporal sequence. Rather, he has devised another structural pattern within the broad frame of the plot, thus forming a double structural pattern. This inner pattern consists of making the sea a link between all the physical actions and mental reflections of the protagonist. The story itself can be separated into five scenic sections: longing for the sea, looking at the sea, swimming in the sea, meditating on the sea and, finally, leaving the sea. The first and the last scenes correspond roughly with the beginning and the end of the story.

In the first scene, fifty two-year old Miu Keyan¹⁷ (缪可言) has since childhood longed to have a look at the sea, but has never fulfilled his wish. This unfulfilled longing is intertwined with his quest for love, which has also been denied him owing to his sufferings under political persecution. The second scene deals with the protagonist's first impression of the sea and his feelings. He comes to visit the sea at last but it is too late. As he says, "*Sea, I am seeing you at last! You have been on my mind for half a century, and now I have finally come to be beside you. After what I have been through, my head has grown white*

*like you, whitecaps!"*¹⁸ (大海, 我终于见到了你! 我终于来到了你的身边, 经过半个世纪的思恋, 经过了许多磨难, 你我都白了头发——浪花!) He does not feel the excitement which he had anticipated, and this makes him very sad. This cheerless mood is juxtaposed with a description of his nonchalant attitude towards a belated marriage. The association adds to the protagonist's sense of lost youth and valuable time. Miu Keyan tries to recapture some of his youthful vitality by attempting to swim far out across the sea, only to be checked by a cramp in the leg. He has to admit that he is no longer young. The section on meditating on the sea is a description of the character's appreciation of the sea and the sky together with his reflections. The theme, however, is still youth versus age. The cheerless mood finally makes him decide to leave the seaside ahead of his schedule. On the eve of his departure, he goes to enjoy the night scene with the moon over the sea and meets a young couple. Miu Keyan suddenly experiences an epiphany that "the waves of love, youth and freedom roll and flow forward generation by generation; they never turn aged, never become apathetic, never stop."¹⁹ (爱情, 青春, 自由的波涛, 一代又一代地流动着, 翻腾着, 永远不会老, 永远不会淡漠, 更永远不会中断。) So he abandons his melancholy when he leaves.

The novelette *The Butterfly* also has a double structural pattern. Here, too, a simple plot serves as a frame for the whole work. It begins with the protagonist on his way back from the countryside to the hotel. When he arrives at the hotel and sits on the sofa, he falls into recollections, which form the major part of this work. The recollections are organized around twelve topics and, as a whole, relate the life story of the protagonist during the past thirty years. The protagonist stops his recollections in the last section and prepares to resume his duties as a vice-minister. Thus, there is a more complicated structural pattern in this novelette than in the short stories discussed above. The framing plot that

begins with his preparation for office does serve as a unifying factor like the plot in *Dreams of the Sea*. Within this linear frame, the materials are arranged in thirteen topics indicated by subtitles. These topics are like rays of light, the centre of which is the protagonist seated on the sofa. The subtitles serve as indicators for the readers to recall the centre of radiation. The topics are neither temporally nor logically arranged. Each tells a separate story but they are all related to the hero - Zhang Siyuan²⁰ (张思远). Together these subtitles serve as a frame and provide unity and order to the seemingly chaotic materials which overlap in time. Hence, they form a radiating structural network within the narrative frame. Moreover, within this radiating pattern is implied a complete story; while the reader is reading the recollections, he can reconstruct the complete story in his mind.

Bolshevik Salute differs from all the other works treated here in that it lacks any semblance of a plot to provide unity. Perhaps that is the very reason why this work looks less unified than the others. The entire work is divided into seven numbered chapters. However, these chapters are rather arbitrarily separated, and do not at all function as indicators for division, for the reader will tend to ignore the chapter numbers. This novelette, like *The Butterfly*, implies a complete life story for the main character, Zhong Yicheng²¹ (钟亦成), during his past thirty years. However, the author has cut the whole story into pieces and then rearranged them into various chapters. Each piece is marked by year, month, and even marked by day. The effect is that of a jumping rhythm through flashbacks and flash-forwards.

The author has actually divided the story into four periods:

- 1) 1949-1957,
- 2) 1957-1966,

3) 1966-1978,
and 4) 1978-1979.

The first period can be found in chapters two, three, and four; the second in chapters one, three, four, five, six, and seven; the third in chapters one, two, three, six, and seven; and the last period is scattered through chapters four, six, and seven. Sometimes the author deals with the second and third periods together. In rearranging the temporal sequence, Wang Meng seems to aim at a comparison of past and present in the hero's experiences. The juxtaposition of his activities as an active Party worker in the first period with his sufferings in the second and third periods brings out the absurdity of political life in China after 1957. The effect is especially strong in chapters two, three, and four. But since the author has not devised a better structural pattern, the work looks rather disjointed. The only relief is that the author, in cutting the periods into pieces, has not further confused the time sequence, so that a careful reader can still reconstruct, with difficulty, the whole story. For example, the "February 1950" part in chapter two is a continuation of the "January 1949" part in chapter three, which, in turn, follows the "January 1949" part in chapter two.

Thus, there are three basic structural patterns in Wang Meng's experimental works. The first is to rely on a simple plot which has a beginning and an ending. Within this frame of plot, the author develops the impressions, thoughts and feelings of the protagonist. The plot may end with the flowing of the character's consciousness as in *The Voices of Spring* or may have a relatively realistic ending with the character's external actions as in *The Eyes of the Night* and *Kite Streamers*. The second pattern is to use an inner structure within a simple frame of plot, which makes the whole work more complicated. This inner structure may be a scenic arrangement as in *Dreams of the Sea* or a topic

arrangement in a radiating shape as in *The Butterfly*. The third structural pattern, found in *Bolshevik Salute*, is to employ a formal chapter arrangement that tries to bring the chaotic material into coherence, which, in my view, is not successfully accomplished. There is one thing in common in the first and second types: the author has not totally discarded the element of plot but has reduced its status from the chief element of the narrative to a mere structural frame. On the other hand, there is something in common with the second and the third types: a complete life story is implied within the structural arrangement, which can be reconstructed by the reader.

As has been discussed above, Wang Meng has not totally discarded plot in his experimental fiction. This phenomenon shows that he has not gone as far as Woolf and Joyce in his experimentation with stream-of-consciousness. In terms of structural patterns, Wang Meng seems closer to Faulkner than to other major Western stream-of-consciousness novelists. In Faulkner's two major stream-of-consciousness works, *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*, for example, there is substantial unity of action as the chief structural device aided occasionally by formal scenic arrangement: "Because there is such a coherent plot and because the characters act in an external drama which has a beginning, complications, climax, and ending, the absolute need for further unifying devices does not exist."²² So in Wang Meng, as in Faulkner, we cannot find a heavy reliance, as in Woolf and Joyce, on such unifying devices as the unities of time, place, character, leitmotifs, parody of previously established literary patterns, symbolic structures, natural or theoretical cyclical schemes, and so on. This use of plot, albeit simple, is the hallmark that distinguishes Faulkner and Wang Meng from the so-called "pure" stream-of-consciousness writers to a point where they combine the traditional novel with the stream-of-consciousness genre.

The same can be said of Wang Meng's use of various stream-of-consciousness techniques. Humphrey has classified four basic stream-of-consciousness techniques: direct interior monologue, indirect interior monologue, omniscient description and soliloquy.²³ It would be preferable to call them the four basic modes of stream-of-consciousness presentation. Direct interior monologue presents the character's consciousness directly to the reader with a complete or almost complete disappearance of the author. It does not, either, assume the presence of a reader or an auditor, for it does not care about the reader's expectation. It is in the first person and there are no commentaries from the author although sometimes the author will slightly intrude as a guide or commentator. Even at such moments the author is scarcely perceptible and the authorial language tends to fuse into the language of the protagonist, so that it is impossible, even after close analysis, to be certain of the precise point at which the character's consciousness begins to be represented.

Indirect interior monologue is in the third person. Unlike direct interior monologue, it assumes the presence of the author: an omniscient author is continuously there between the character's psyche and the reader to present unspoken material as if it were directly from the consciousness of a character. But it is still considered the character's interior monologue because what it presents of consciousness is direct: it is in the idiom and with the peculiarities of the character's psychic process. Owing to the author's interference, indirect interior monologue has greater coherence and surface unity than direct interior monologue.²⁴

The other two modes of stream-of-consciousness presentation, soliloquy and omniscient description, need to be differentiated from direct and indirect interior monologue. They are actually conventional literary devices which stream-of-consciousness writers have put to

special use: for the description or presentation of the character's psychological state. Soliloquy might be confused with direct interior monologue because both are in the first person. But soliloquy assumes the presence of a reader or an auditor and therefore has greater coherence than direct interior monologue. The character's emotions and ideas expressed in soliloquy are often related to his external actions. Soliloquy is more limited in the depth of consciousness than interior monologue. In other words, the level of consciousness in soliloquy is usually close to the surface. Omniscient description, on the other hand, needs to be differentiated from indirect interior monologue. Both modes assume the author's interference and represent the psychic content and process of a character, but the presentation in the mode of omniscient description is not direct: not in the idiom and with the peculiarities of the character's consciousness. It has obvious signs of the author's intervention and therefore looks very coherent.

Characteristically, Wang Meng often employs the third person in his narration and description. As discussed above, the author relies heavily on plot for unity in his works. Thus, there is a great deal of narration of external activities and description of external objects. As a matter of fact, extended presentations of the character's consciousness are rare in his works. The author alternates between narrating external actions, describing physical objects, and presenting the mental state of the characters. The third person omniscient description and indirect interior monologue prove to be handy techniques for Wang Meng, for he seems to find them convenient for him to move in and out of the character's mind at short intervals. The reader is aware of the continuous presence of the author.

Take, for example, *The Eyes of the Night*, the opening sentence of which is an omniscient description of Chen Gao's impression of the

street lamps which look like “two rows of lights shooting out from his own head.”²⁵ ([陈杲] 总觉得是从他头顶抛出去两道光流) The rest of the paragraph and the first half of the second paragraph are descriptions of the urban night scene as it impresses itself on him:

*Big vehicles and small cars. Trolleys and bicycles. Honking, chatter, and laughter. Only at night did this large city show off its energy and uniqueness. The scattered but attention-getting neon signs and the revolving poles in front of barber shops began to appear. There was permed hair and long hair. High heel shoes and low heel shoes, sleeveless frocks and dresses. The fragrance of toilet water and face cream. Cities and women were just beginning to pretty themselves up, but already there were people who wouldn't sit still for it. This was interesting. Chen Gao had not been back to this city for more than twenty years....*²⁶

大汽车和小汽车。无轨电车和自行车。鸣笛声和说笑声。大城市的夜晚才最有大城市的活力和特点。开始有了稀稀落落的，然而还是引人注目的霓虹灯和理发馆门前的旋转花浪。有烫了的头发和留了的长发。高跟鞋和半高跟鞋，无袖套头的裙衫。花露水和雪花膏的气味。城市和女人刚刚开始略略打扮一下自己，已经有人坐不住了。这很有趣。陈杲已经有二十多年不到这个大城市来了。

Here, the choppy sentences mimic the numerous disordered impressions of various external objects in the protagonist's mind. The three complete sentences, "Only at night...", "Cities and women were just beginning...", and "This was interesting" may be regarded either as the protagonist's thought or as the author's comment. After "This was interesting," the author steps out of the protagonist's mind and resumes his narration without breaking the paragraph. The shift does not seem

abrupt, for the reader will assume that the author is using the third person all the way through. This identification of the protagonist's interior monologue with the author's commentaries might have contributed to the sense of smoothness in the shifting of points of view. But it also mars characterization, for the protagonist often becomes the mouthpiece of the author rather than having his own distinct voice.

This is the case again with the following passage from *The Butterfly*:

*Did it all happen just yesterday? Is it Haiyun's voice that is ringing faintly in his ears? It must have greatly weakened and is approaching zero now. But it can never get to zero. Somehow it will always be there. And that neatly-delineated slender figure of hers – which corner of the universe has the radiance of her figure now penetrated? Or has she really ceased to be? Perhaps she is still visible in some remote corner of the universe. It takes hundreds of light years for the light of a star in another galaxy to reach human eyes. So what about her light? Isn't it possible that her light will outlast herself?*²⁷

这是昨天刚刚发生过的事吗？海云的声浪还在他的耳边颤抖吗？她的声音还在空气里传播着吗？即使已经衰减到近于零了也罢，但总不是零啊，总存在着啊。还有她的分明的清秀的身影，这形像所映射出来的光辉，又传播到宇宙的哪些角落呢？她真的不在了吗？现在在宇宙的一个遥远的角落，也许仍然能清晰地看见她吧？一颗属于另一个星系的星星此时此刻的光，被人们看见还要用上几百年的时间，她的光呢？不也可能比她自身更长久么？

Does the author in this passage present unspoken material directly from the character's psyche or does he simply describe the character's

thoughts through the conventional mode of omniscient description? The sentence structure is neatly ordered and there are no linguistic features that are typical of the protagonist. However, the following example, also taken from *The Butterfly*, looks more like the protagonist's indirect interior monologue:

Just before he was totally out, he vaguely heard a sob escape from that teenaged boy who had struck him simpering beside him. He was Dongdong, no mistake!

Class vengeance! All this could only be explained from the viewpoint of class struggle. Haiyun's case by now was all settled, and the conclusion that she was a class enemy was official and irrevocable. As for Zhang Siyuan, even though he was now under investigation by the party's provincial committee, with his file kept in the Central Organisational Department, his status was still head of the Party's municipal committee. True, the revolutionary masses were trying to discredit him and had brought a series of charges against him, but so far no conclusion had been made and no verdict ever passed.²⁸

昏迷中，他听到了那个打他的少年——他就是冬冬，没错！

阶级报复！只有用阶级斗争的观点才能说明这一切。海云是已经定性，已经作了板上钉钉的正式结论的阶级敌人。而张思远，尽管目前在受群策群众的审查，但他的职务是省委正式任命并在中央组织部备了案的。他的身份仍然是一个城市的党的委员会的领导人。革命群众要打倒他，给他提出了许多罪名，但这一切没有作结论，没有定性。

This passage may be regarded as an example of indirect interior monologue. It is a direct presentation of the character's consciousness in the idiom and with the peculiarities of the character's psychic processes. It is presented unmistakably from the protagonist's point of view, which the author is implicitly mocking.

Although Wang Meng usually presents or describes the character's consciousness in the third person, he will very often slip out of the scene for a length of time after he has ushered the reader into the protagonist's mental world. So the author's omniscient description may turn into the character's direct interior monologue, as is illustrated in the opening paragraph of *The Voices of Spring*:

*Night arrived with a bang. A faint square of moonlight appeared on the opposite wall. Yue Zhifeng's heart tensed and then relaxed. The carriage was swaying slightly. The passengers were swaying slightly. What a sweet cradle of youth! In summertime, leaving their clothes under the willow, a bare-bottomed young gang jumped into the clear stream in the native village and dove forward a dozen meters. Who knew whose head would poke up where? Who knew how many tadpoles were contained in the mouthful of water he swallowed in panic? When they closed their eyes and fell fast asleep in the rippling water flecked with sunlight and shade from the trees, they swayed slightly as we are doing now. Youth and home that are lost and not lost, do you blame me? Will you welcome me? Mother's grave and father on his way to the grave!*²⁹

咣地一声，黑夜就到来了。一个黄昏的，方方的大月亮出现在对面墙上。岳之峰的心紧缩了一下，又舒张开了。车身在轻轻地颤抖。人们在轻轻地摇摆。多么甜蜜的童年的摇篮啊！夏天的时候，把衣服放在大柳树下，脱光了屁股的小伙伴们一跃跳进故乡的清凉

的小河里，一个猛子扎出十几米，谁知道谁在哪里露出头来呢？谁知道被他慌乱中吞下的一口水里，包含着多少条蛤蟆蝌蚪呢？闭上眼睛，熟睡在闪耀着阳光和树影的涟漪之上，不也是这样轻轻地，轻轻地摇晃着吗？失却了的和没有失去的童年和故乡，责备我么？欢迎我么？母亲的坟墓和正在走向坟墓的父亲！

In this passage, the author drops out of his omniscient role after "The passengers were swaying slightly" and begins to present the protagonist's psychic process in the mode of direct interior monologue. This passage also shows that the protagonist's mental associations are not chaotic but fairly ordered: the swaying carriage - the cradle - swaying on the surface of the water, and the sentences are often grammatical and complete. This feature shows up more clearly in the second paragraph of *The Voices of Spring*. The character's consciousness moves from the din of the train's wheels striking against the rails to the clang of the iron hammer falling on an anvil, to villages on the Loess Plateau where people still rely on physical power to forge iron, and back to the din of the wheels, and forward to a pop song called the "Tinkle of the Fountain," to the tinkling sound of the triangular porcelain tablets under the awnings of Cantonese houses, to American pop music, to Yang Zirong's arias, to the drums and gongs of Beijing opera, back to the din of the wheels again.... The associations are a bit fantastic but still logical, with the din of the wheels as their centre.

Wang Meng's "ordered" kind of free association is also illustrated in the dream scene of *The Voices of Spring*. For stream-of-consciousness writers, dream scenes are the best occasions to display the repertoire of stream-of-consciousness techniques. But Wang Meng is very careful in his treatment of such a scene.³⁰ Yue Zhifeng falls into a doze in the carriage. The first scene that occurs in his dream is a group

of children in Frankfurt, Germany. The occurrence of this scene may seem abrupt, for the author does not give any clue until later. Then the scene changes into Yue's native village on the Loess Plateau with the words: "No, it isn't Frankfurt. It's his home village on the North-West Plateau...." After that the scene changes into Beiping before 1949, and then into the capital of the People's Republic. At this point the dream scenes become confused and shift rapidly until the protagonist wakes up. He hears the songs of German children coming from a radio that belongs to a fellow passenger, which explains why his first dream scene is in Frankfurt which he has just visited. The whole dream is divided into scenes which are arranged in a montage-like way, one presented after another, so that the effect is like a moving picture. Separated by paragraphs, the scenes look very orderly. Within each scene, there are sub-scenes represented by choppy sentences and phrases. But the discontinuities are not pronounced and the associations are logical. Here is one of the dream scenes:

No, it isn't Frankfurt. It's his home village on the North-West Plateau. A huge white lilac blossoms over the grey tiles on the roof. Like snow, like white jade, like flying foam. Picking a bright green willow leaf, rolling it into a small tube, looking up at the sky and clouds, blowing a shrill whistle. Startling two little orioles into flight. Carrying a small basket over his arm, going to pick wild vegetables with his elder sister. To throw stones, to chase wild rabbits, to gather mottled quail eggs. Every puppy, every kitten, every calf and foal are playing. Even each blade of grass is dancing.³¹

不。那不是法兰克福。那是西北高原的故乡。一株巨大的白丁香把花开在了屋顶的灰色的瓦瓴上。如雪，如玉，如飞溅的浪花。摘下一条碧绿的柳叶，卷成一个小筒，仰望着蓝天白云，吹一声尖厉的哨子，惊得两个小黄鹌飞起，挎上小篮，跟着大姐姐，去采缣

灰灰菜。去掷石块，去追逐野兔，去捡鹌鹑的斑斓的彩蛋。连每条小狗，每只小猫，每一头牛犊和马驹都在嬉戏。连每根小草都在跳舞。

This scene appears too ordered, so that it looks more like the author's omniscient description than like a direct presentation of the protagonist's dream. However, this is Wang Meng's style.

Wang Meng also uses soliloquy frequently in his works. In fact, many of the direct interior monologues in his works are so ordered that they border on soliloquy. Here are two typical examples from *Bolshevik Salute*:

*But, my grey-coloured friend, what right do you have to talk about seeing through things or not believing? You just hang back on the edge of life. Have you ever dived right into the water? Have you swum in the rushing current of life, floating and sinking? What right does someone who has never been in the water have to discuss water, attack water, and deny water? You are so smart and cherish yourself so much, so you watch from the sidelines with cold eyes and shut off your own life, wasting it all away; so you get old and decrepit, your hair whitens and your teeth fall out, you mutter to yourself, letting out a sound that only a person with severe dysentery should make. Your life is nothing more than a misunderstanding, an anachronistic catastrophe, a sad sound, and that's all. Why can't you see through yourself? Do you have to live on?*³²

然而灰色的朋友，你有什么资格说看透，说不相信呢？你只不过是在生活的岸边逡巡罢了，你下过水吗？你到生活的激流中游过泳，经历过浮沉吗？没有下过水的人有什么资格评论水，抨击水，

否定水呢？你那么聪明，又那么爱惜自己，于是，你冷眼旁观，把自己的生命闲置起来，白白地浪费掉，于是你衰老了，白了头发，落了牙齿，你絮絮叨叨，发出盲肠炎急性发作的病人才能发出的呻吟。你的一生，不过是一场误会，一场不合时宜的灾难，一声哀鸣罢了，你怎么看不透你自己呢？你何必活下去呢？

What did you say? You fervently love the Party? If you fervently love the Party why did the Party cancel your Party membership ticket?

The logic of a genius! It presses on irresistibly, with the ease of a knife cutting through butter: What is a Party ticket, anyway? Surely China doesn't give out Party tickets just like rice coupons, meat coupons, cotton coupons, and oil coupons? What can you exchange your Party ticket for? How much are they bought and sold for on the black market?³³

你说什么？你热爱党？你热爱党为什么注销了你的党票？注销了你的党票你还能热爱党吗？

多么天才的逻辑，真是高屋建瓴，势如破竹！但什么叫党票呢？难道我们的国家除了有粮票，肉票，布票，油票以外，还又发行了党票吗？党票可以换来什么？在黑市又是以多少钱一张的价格买卖的呢？

These passages have great coherence of argument with an audience tacitly assumed. Unmistakably, the author has identified himself with the protagonist.

Thus, Wang Meng uses all the modes of stream-of-consciousness presentation outlined above, but has his own characteristic way of using them.

One feature is that the author seldom employs extensive passages to present directly the character's psychological thoughts, which are often mingled with narration of external action and/or description of external objects. The author constantly moves into and out of the character's psyche, so that the stream of the character's consciousness never flows freely for long.

The second feature of Wang Meng's use of stream-of-consciousness is that the character's mental world is usually close to the surface level. His interior monologue, therefore, looks quite ordered and logically arranged. Even in presenting dream scenes, the author will impose some kind of order on the montage-like arrangement.

The third feature is Wang Meng's constant shift and merging between various modes of stream-of-consciousness presentation, so that it is often difficult to distinguish the author's omniscient description from the character's direct interior monologue, or the character's direct interior monologue from his soliloquy, or the character's direct interior monologue from his indirect one. Sometimes it is even difficult to distinguish the character's monologue from the author's own comment, for the author frequently identifies his own point of view with that of the protagonist. This identification, however, has a detrimental effect on characterization, for the characters in Wang Meng's works seem to possess no distinct voice.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there has been no consensus of opinion as to whether these six works by Wang Meng

belong to the stream-of-consciousness genre or not. Wang Meng himself opposes the use of this epithet to describe his works, saying: "I feel sad about the superficial judgement of my recent works merely as 'stream of consciousness,'" the implication being that he thinks his works transcend that label.³⁴ On the other hand, Wang Meng admits that he has read some Western stream-of-consciousness works and intentionally borrowed some of their techniques.³⁵ It might be argued that, despite their many differences from the recognized Western stream-of-consciousness novels and stories produced by Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, and other writers, Wang Meng's works do display some major features of the genre. To forestall any argument as to the precise definition of "stream of consciousness," however, I have chosen to label these works as "experimental fiction" rather than the controversial term "stream of consciousness fiction." To me the rectification of a name at this point is not so important. I am more concerned with what Wang Meng has actually done to remould the Chinese narrative language in those works.

To say that the works of Wang Meng under discussion display some of the major features of stream-of-consciousness fiction does not mean that the author is a typical modernist writer in the Western sense. As is well known to Western readers, the stream-of-consciousness genre is part of the Western modernist movement, which reached its peak between the two world wars. The hallmarks of high modernism are a rebellion against established traditions, conventions, and rules; a pervasive sense of cultural and social crisis and disillusionment *vis-a-vis* the heritage of civilization and political institutions; and a new concept of human beings and of their position and function in society. Therefore, modernism is not simply a movement of technical innovation but involves a change of concepts regarding man, life, society, culture, and the world, as well as literature and art. Sharing these characteristics, the Western stream-of-consciousness novels have a general tone of

pessimism. Man is no longer considered noble and rational as in Renaissance and Romantic times. He is a creature full of self-contradiction and of conflicts with others in society. In his unconscious mind there are dark impulses and desires that run counter to the accepted moral values in society. Moreover, he has morbid, absurd, and confused psychological characteristics. The stream-of-consciousness genre of fiction is theoretically based upon this vision of man and the world, though, as a set of fictional techniques, stream-of-consciousness has a wider application and has actually merged into other trends of contemporary literature.³⁶

Wang Meng has risen out of a milieu very different from that of the Western modernists. It seems difficult to pinpoint his general ideological tendency as a writer with just one phrase. There is, indeed, a certain trace of Western modernism in his works, which might be due partly to an influence from Western works. But the more significant cause is rooted in the Chinese social soil after 1957 and in the author's personal experiences during times of political turmoil, especially the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, which has resulted in a social situation comparable to the milieu in the West after the First World War. Wang Meng, like many other contemporary Chinese writers, has keenly felt the disintegration of the old belief and value system. He used to have faith in the orthodox literary canon stipulated by Mao Zedong in his "Yan'an Talks" (在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话) in 1942 and pushed to its extremes by Jiang Qing³⁷ (江青) during the Cultural Revolution. Wang Meng admits:

...I heartily acclaimed [during the Cultural Revolution] phrases like "I'm coming! Mountains and rivers move aside!", tried hard to grasp the meaning of such expressions as "soar up to the heavens" and "man can conquer nature for sure"....Instead of opposing them, I

*tried my best to comprehend the notions of "three types of prominence" and "sublime and perfect characters," despite the fact that subconsciously I thoroughly detested them ...*³⁸

Wang Meng's ambivalent attitude towards the Maoist theory of literature was typical of many writers during the Cultural Revolution, an age of unbelievable stupidity and terror. But they gradually found, as Wang Meng did, that literature,

*... became nothing but hack scribbling and self-deceiving nonsense, a lackey of the authorities, less than a tuft of hair on some VIP's skin Literature predictably became despicable, full of lies, deceptive and anaesthetic, an opiate brewed in a thieves' kitchen, the executioner's mask, a slanderous conspiratorial device.*³⁹

Wang Meng did not express this unorthodox view of literature until the late 1970's, when the Cultural Revolution had come to an end and the authorities starting allowed a relatively free political situation. It is understandable, however, that this idea had been brewing in the minds of many Chinese intellectuals for a long time. The Cultural Revolution resulted in a general crisis of belief and values among the Chinese people, especially the intellectuals, who used to place all their hope in the Communists for their dream of a powerful China.

Unlike Western modernists, whose breaking away from convention led to a totally new literary movement, Chinese writers in the post-Mao era seem to be less original. Their reaction against the orthodox canon of literature has rather led to a return to the May Fourth realistic and humanistic tradition combined with an interest in the Western modernist views of literature. In analysing Lu Xun, Leo Ou-fan Lee mentions two crucial legacies from the May Fourth tradition: one is "the self-imposed

moral burden of being a critical conscience on behalf of society *vis-a-vis* the political establishment," the other is the self-consciousness of creating a new literature as against tradition.⁴⁰ Wang Meng seems to have inherited both legacies, and he is thus very much consciously preoccupied with contemporary Chinese social conditions. Even when his major concern is with the mental state of his characters, the author never forgets the external social reality. He says, "When we write about psychology, feelings and consciousness, we have not forgotten that they are reflections of life; we have not forgotten their social significance."⁴¹

Let us re-examine *The Eyes of the Night*. This story presents the reader with a series of perceptions, thoughts and feelings that go through the mind of the protagonist, Chen Gao, who returns to a large city to attend an academic meeting after twenty years of exile in a provincial town. The bulk of the story is about his impressions of city life at night and his reflections on social phenomena in contemporary China. There is no aura around this kind of life, as was often found in Maoist literature. Rather, we see a truthful picture of the life with which ordinary Chinese are so familiar. There are symptoms of backwardness and social problems typical of contemporary China, but there are also signs to show that China is on its way to modernization. Notable in this story are the protagonist's reflections on "democracy," which had become a term popular with the urban intellectuals and young people, and on "legs of lamb," which is the chief topic in the provincial town where he has been working. Indeed, these two topics address the two most important problems in contemporary China. Their seemingly humorous juxtaposition serves to enhance their profound significance, which reflects the author's realistic concerns.

If Wang Meng has turned to the May Fourth realistic tradition for an outlet to his feelings of a crisis of belief, why then has he relinquished

his earlier kind of realism, represented by his *The young Newcomer in the Organization Department*? This story, published in the 1950's, is critical of Communist bureaucracy, which caused the author's political exile for more than twenty years in the post Mao period, some readers actually wrote to Wang Meng and hoped that he would resume his former style. This hope has two meanings. One refers to the more traditional kind of narrative devices or the so-called realistic mode of literary creation, and the other points to a bolder kind of criticism of political institutions. Wang Meng seems to have deviated from both with his later fiction. Shortly after the Cultural Revolution, the author seemed to feel a strong impulse to pour out what he had thought, felt and experienced across "a land of 8,000 li" during the past "thirty stormy years" of exile life. He was dissatisfied with the traditional devices of fiction, which he found inadequate for the expression of his flowing thoughts and emotions.

He writes:

A more complex dimension of experience, thought, emotion, and life requires a more complex mode of expression.... In order to fully reveal that 8,000 li and thirty years and to lay bare the relationships and contrasts in all that happened, I have tried to use a kind of 'psychological description' to break spatial and temporal boundaries.⁴²

This motivation to use new methods for the expression of complicated thoughts and emotions is similar to what compelled the Western modernists to do the same. Here is a much quoted passage from Woolf:

The mind receives myriad impressions - trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides

*they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday.... Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.... [The modernist writers] attempt to come closer to life and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves them, even if to do so they must discard most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the novelists.*⁴³

So a new kind of awareness of life requires a new set of devices and techniques for expression. Modernist or not, Wang Meng has experienced this kind of awareness, which accounts for his experimentation with stream-of-consciousness techniques. He has found these techniques very handy for his purpose. He argues for the legitimate status of human psyche and perception as an object of literary expression, which is evidently a direct challenge to the orthodox canon of literature. This interest in the human psyche, however, is not contradictory to the author's ultimate concern with Chinese reality. It is, rather, an extension of the May Fourth kind of realism, for the writer never forgets external reality even when he enters the human mind. Thus, Wang Meng is able to absorb some of the Western modernistic concepts without losing his basic stance as a realist in the May Fourth tradition.

Wang Meng's second deviation, from the “*Young Newcomer*” kind of writing, is also worthy of comment. It is true that, despite his radical position concerning the use of stream-of-consciousness techniques, Wang Meng is not as dissident in the content of his works as some other post-Mao Chinese writers.⁴⁴ Readers may feel that an optimistic mood permeates all his works. This optimism tends to soften the harshness of reality that is presented in his works. Wang Meng holds

that the role literature plays in “intervening in life” (干预生活) should not be overemphasized, for it will only incur brutal intervention against literature from the authorities.⁴⁵ On the other hand, he calls for a variety of tones in literature in addition to the dominant critical one in post-Mao Chinese literature. He favours humorous, cool-minded and warm-hearted tones, which are in fact characteristic of his own works. Wang Meng's problem is that his optimistic tone is often associated with didacticism that is not so far removed from the authorities' call to “look forward to the bright future.” This optimistic and didactic tone has marred the overall quality of Wang Meng's works considerably, so that his kind of realism still contains a clear note of the Maoist canon that literature should serve the politics of the Party. Readers may feel that he still has a strong faith in the Party despite his personal sufferings during the past years. After all, Wang Meng still has strong leanings towards the leftist approach, and he has the limitations this entails.

Thus, Wang Meng is complex in terms of literary and ideological approaches in his work. Essentially he can be regarded as a realistic writer in the May Fourth tradition, concerned with Chinese reality and with the creation of a new kind of literature. He also has some ideas that are close to Western modernism, especially in terms of his argument for the legitimate status of the human psyche as a literary subject. However, his thinking is also influenced by the Maoist theory of literature as a political tool. In spite of this complication, Wang Meng is still one of the chief post-Mao writers in Chinese literature and contributed to the second blooming of literature and art in the era after the Cultural Revolution. After all, no other post-Mao writer in China can rival Wang Meng in the courage to “eat snail”⁴⁶ (吃蜗牛), the term used by a well-known writer in China, Liu Xinwu, in commenting on Wang Meng's daring experimentation with new narrative forms before any other Chinese writer.

Notes

- ¹ He Xilai, "*Xinling de bodong yu qingtu*" (*Throbbing and Unburdening the Heart*) in Zhu Zhai, ed., *Zhongguo xin wenyi daxi* (*Series on China's New Literature*), Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chuban gongsi, 1986, Vol. II, p. 539
- ² Originally, "*The Eyes of the Night*" was published in *Guangming ribao* (21 October 1979), "*The Voices of Spring*" in *Renmin wenxue*, No.5 (1980), "*Kite Streamers*" in *Beijing wenyi* No.5 (1980), "*Dreams of the Sea*" in *Shanghai wenyi* No. 6 (1980), "*Bolshevik Salute*" in *Dangdai* No. 3 (1979), and "*The Butterfly*" in *Shi yue* No. 4 (1980). All six have been collected in *Wang Meng xiaoshuo baogaowenxue xuan* [Selected novelettes, stories and reportage by Wang Meng] (Beijing: Beijing, 1981)
- ³ A description of the relevant arguments and discussions can be found in William Tay, "*Wang Meng, Stream-of-consciousness, and the Controversy over Modernism*," *Modern Chinese Literature* 1/1, 1984, pp. 7-21
- ⁴ Taiwanese writers preceded Wang Meng in experimenting with modernistic fictional techniques during the 1950's and 1960's (see Jeannette L. Faurot ed., *Chinese Fiction from Taiwan: Critical Perspectives*, Indiana University Press, 1980's.) But Taiwan literature was unknown to mainland Chinese readers until the 1980's. According to Tay, Wang Zengqi's "*Fuchou*" ("Revenge"), published in 1945, was a pioneering effort to experiment with the stream - of-consciousness technique in the history of Chinese fiction. See Tay, p. 15
- ⁵ Elly Hagenaar in her book, *Stream of Consciousness and Free Indirect Discourse in Modern Chinese Literature*, pointed out that: "In the wave of liberalization which emerged in China in 1978, a new literature began to take shape. . . . The fact that stream of consciousness appeared in literature in the course of the 1980s is significant, . . . Chinese literary critics commonly view Wang Meng as being the first to have explored stream of consciousness in his post-1978 work. They commonly view Zhang Jie and Zhang Kangkang as writers of introverted fiction." Leiden University Press, Leiden, 1992. pp.1-4
- ⁶ Aristotle, *Poetics in Critical Theory since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971, p. 52
- ⁷ Virginia Woolf, "*Modern Fiction*," *The Stream of Consciousness Technique in the Modern Novel*, ed. Erwin R. Steinberg, Port Washington, N. Y., Kennikat 1979, P.66
- ⁸ G.E.Lessing, *Laocoon*, In Adams, pp.349-52, Qian Zhongshu has applied the notion to narratives. See Qian Zhongshu, *Qi Zhui Ji* [Seven Essays] Shanghai: Guji, 1985, pp.41-48
- ⁹ The Ming-Qing novels, commonly divided into chapters, ended with ' . . . please come to listen to the next chapter'. We can find typical examples in famous novels such as: *A Dream of Red Mansions* and *The Water Margin*.
- ¹⁰ Robert Humphrey, "*Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*", Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958, p. 113

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- 11 Ibid., p. 114
- 12 Lydia H. Liu, *Narratives of Modern Selfhood: First-person Fiction in May Fourth Literature* in Liu Kang and Xiaobing Tang, ed., *Politics, Ideology, and Literary Discourse in Modern China*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1993, pp. 102-104
- 13 *The Politics of Technique* by Lee Ou-Fan LEE, in *After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society 1978-1981* Ed. By Jeffrey C. Kinkley, Harvard University, 1985, p.160
- 14 Chen Gao is the main character in *Eyes of the Night*.
- 15 Yue Zhifeng is the main character in *Voices of Spring*.
- 16 王蒙, <<不断探索新的表现手法>>, 北京晚报, 1980年7月2日
Wang Meng, (*Constantly Searching for New Methods of Expression*), Beijing Wanbao, 2 July, 1980
- 17 Miu Keyan is the narrator of *Dreams of the Sea*.
- 18 *Wang Meng Xiaoshuo*. p.209
- 19 Ibid., p. 221
- 20 Zhang Siyuan is the main hero of the novelette *The Butterfly*
- 21 Zhong Yicheng is the main character from *Bolshevik Salute*.
- 22 Humphrey, p.105
- 23 Ibid., p.23
- 24 For these two paragraphs, refer to the chapter of *Definition in Stream of Consciousness and Free Indirect Discourse in Modern Chinese Literature* by Elly Hagenaar, Centre of Non-Western Studies, Leiden University, The Netherlands, 1992, pp.7-8
- 25 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 4 p. 235
- 26 Ibid., p. 235
- 27 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3, p. 75
- 28 Ibid., p. 94
- 29 *Wang Meng Collection*, Vol. 4, p. 288
- 30 *Wang Meng Xiaoshuo*. pp. 200-202
- 31 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 4, p. 295
- 32 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3, p. 49
- 33 Ibid., pp. 49-50

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- ³⁴ Wang Meng, “*Qingting Zhe Shenghuo de Shengxi*” [“*Listen attentively to the Voices of Life*”]. *Zhongguo Dangdai Wenxue Yanjiu Ziliao: Wang Meng Zhuanji* [*Materials for Research in Contemporary Chinese Literature: Wang Meng*], eds. Xu Jiming and Wu Yihua (Guiyang: Guizhou People’s Press, 1984), p.99
- ³⁵ Wang Meng, “*Guanyu ‘Chun Zhi Sheng’ de Tongxin*” p. 56
- ³⁶ William Tay, pp 7-21
- ³⁷ Jiang Qing ,(1914–91) Chinese Communist political leader, wife of Mao Zedong. Born Li Yun-ho, she changed her name to Lan Ping in 1938 when beginning an acting career, joining the Communist party the same year. In 1939, she married Mao Zedong and thereafter remained in the background of Chinese Communist affairs until the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Appointed deputy director (1966) of the Cultural Revolution, she incited radical youths against senior party and government officials, and replaced nearly all earlier works of literature and art with revolutionary Maoist works. A member of the politburo (1969–76), she was one of the most powerful political figures during Mao’s last years. For her role in the Cultural Revolution she was arrested (Oct., 1976) by Hua Guofeng, Mao’s successor, and sentenced to death (later commuted to life imprisonment).
- ³⁸ Wang Meng, “*Wo Zai Xunzhao Shenme*” [“*What Am I Searching for*”], Xu Jiming and Wu Yihua, P. 35
- ³⁹ Wang Meng, *Butterfly*, pp. 15-16
- ⁴⁰ Lee Ou-Fan Lee, *Lu Xun and His Legacy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, p. 4
- ⁴¹ Wang Meng, “*Guanyu ‘Yishiliu’ de Tongxin*” (“*An Open Letter on ‘Stream-of-Consciousness’*”), p. 126
- ⁴² Ibid., p. 126
- ⁴³ Steinberg, pp. 66-67
- ⁴⁴ Lee, “*The Politics of Technique*,” pp. 159-160
- ⁴⁵ Wang Meng “*Guanyu chuanguo de tongxin*” p. 344
- ⁴⁶ Liu Xinwu, “*Ta Zai Chi Woniu*” [“*He is Eating Snails*”]. Beijing *Wanbao*, 8 July 1980

“Eating Snails” is a metaphor here. It indicates that stream-of-consciousness is a complete ‘foreign’ thing, and Wang Meng is the first person to adopt it in his writing.

Chapter Four

Stream-of-Consciousness and Free Indirect Discourse in Wang Meng's Fiction

我承认我有意识地用各种不同的手法写小说。我也承认我读了些外国的“意识流”小说。我们搞一点“意识流”，不是为了发神经，不是为了发泄世纪末的悲哀，而是为了塑造一种更深沉，更美丽，更丰实也更文明的灵魂。

--- 王 蒙

I have to admit that I consciously experiment with various techniques of fiction writing. I have to admit that I read some foreign “stream-of-consciousness” novels and stories. . . . We use a little “stream-of-consciousness” not in order to go insane, or to give vent to some tragic mal de siecle; but rather in order to portray a more profound, more beautiful, more ample, and more civilized soul.

--- Wang Meng

In the wave of liberalization which emerged in China in 1978, a new literature began to take shape. Readers and writers in China showed an increasing interest in the works of western modernism, which they viewed as marking the passage towards modern world literature. Certain elements of modernism made their appearance in Chinese fiction throughout the years from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. One of these elements is stream-of-consciousness. “This device in literature was controversial at first, due to the fact that it presupposes the existence of the unconscious as the driving force in

human behaviour”¹, whereas in the preceding period literary writing in China had been dominated by Marxism, Leninism and Maoism’s “theory of reflection.” (*Fanyinglun* 反映论) The fact that stream-of-consciousness appeared in literature in the course of the 1980s is significant, as it marks a fundamental change with respect to the preceding period: “This change amounts to an ‘inward turn’ in literature: that is, the prevalent form of realism in fiction, involving depiction of literary characters through their actions, was replaced by characterization through descriptions of consciousness.”² This implies that individual thoughts and emotions became the focus of attention in a socialist society with strong collective tendencies. However, individualism had been present in the literature in China of the 1920s and 1930s, but had not been tolerated under socialism up to 1978. So, in the 1980s, the representation of the dimension of individual thinking in literary works was something new, for which new methods had to be explored.

After an imposed silence of more than twenty years, Wang Meng emerged in 1978 as one of the most widely discussed writers in the post-Mao era. His fiction at the time was noted not for its critical content, but for its experimentation with the “stream-of-consciousness” technique.

This chapter will study and describe one aspect of the innovations in Chinese literature of the post-Mao period – the influence of western stream-of-consciousness – as used by Wang Meng in his fiction, with detailed reference to his two short stories: *Eyes of the Night* and *Dream of the Sea*, which were published during the early 1980s.

Background

Originating from William James, “stream-of-consciousness” is a psychological term which has been used by literary critics to refer to different techniques as well as a fictional sub-genre.³ Even in the West, the term “stream-of-consciousness” has sometimes been used rather loosely and confusingly. It is thus necessary to begin this chapter with an attempt to define and delimit the term. As one dictionary puts it: “Stream-of-consciousness, literary technique, first used in the late 19th century, employed to evince subjective as well as objective reality. It reveals the character’s feelings, thought, and actions, often following an associative rather than a logical sequence, without commentary by the author.”⁴

Stream-of-consciousness, as a term, was originally introduced by William James, the American philosopher and psychologist, in his book *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). Widely used in narrative fiction, the technique was perhaps brought to its highest point of development in *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) by the Irish novelist and poet James Joyce. Other exponents of the form were American novelist William Faulkner and British novelist Virginia Woolf. The British writer Dorothy Richardson is considered by some actually to be the pioneer in use of the device. Her novel *Pilgrimage* (1911-1938), a 12-volume sequence, is an intense analysis of the development of a sensitive young woman and her responses to the world around her.⁵

The speech acts of the narrators and characters have long been distinguished by “direct” and “indirect” forms. A direct speech (external voice) or thought (internal voice) can be: “I have to go,” he said (or thought). An indirect speech or thought: He said (or thought)

that he had to go. While the presence of the “that” may be optional in English, the differences between the two forms involve the tense and the pronoun. In the indirect form the tense of the reported clause within the sentence is usually one tense earlier than that of its direct counterpart, and the pronoun is the third person rather than the first.⁶ Traditionally, it was thought that the two speech forms were simple variants of each other; but linguists have shown that the deeper semantic relations of the two forms do not allow us to blur the differences.⁷

Since the nineteenth century, there is one form of speech in most European narratives which falls somewhere between direct and indirect forms. This is the free form, which deletes the introductory clause. Let us consider the following four English examples:

- 1.) **He paused and said to himself, “I have to go.”**
(Direct form)
- 2.) **He paused and said to himself that he had to go.**
(Indirect form)
- 3.) **He paused. He had to go.**
(Free indirect form)
- 4.) **He paused. I have to go.**
(Free direct form)

In an extensive study on the free indirect form in fiction, Roy Pascal has called it the “dual voice,” because in this form the texture and identity of the character’s voice can be maintained without any loss of the narrator’s objective interpretation of events.⁸ The free direct form, according to Seymour Chatman, is a feature that characterizes “interior monologue,” where the free indirect form does not, “because a narrator is presupposed by the third person

pronoun and the anterior sense.”⁹ Chatman also points out that the free direct form may appear together with the free indirect form in fiction, and such examples abound in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

As C. Hugh Holman has observed, critics have often employed the term “interior monologue” (free direct thought) synonymously with stream-of-consciousness.”¹⁰ Such usage is misleading because the former--defined by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellopp as “a direct, immediate presentation of the unspoken thoughts of a character without any intervening narrator”¹¹--is chiefly a syntactic arrangement, whereas the latter is an ordering principle. According to Seymour Chatman, the criteria features of the interior monologue are:

- 1.) *The character’s self-reference, if any, is first person.*
- 2.) *The current discourse-moment is the same as the story-moment; hence any predicate referring to the current moment will be in the present tense. This is not an “epic present” depicting past time, but rather a real present referring to contemporary time of the action. Memories and other references to the past will occur in the simple past, not the past perfect.*
- 3.) *The language--idiom, diction, word-and syntactic-choice--are identifiable as those of the character, whether or not a narrator elsewhere intervenes.*
- 4.) *Allusions to anything in the character’s experience are made with no more explanation than would be needed in his own thinking, that is,*

5.) *There is no presumptive audience other than the thinker himself, no deference to the ignorance or expository needs of a narratee.*¹²

Using these five criteria, Chatman argues that stream-of-consciousness is then freed to mean something else, “namely the random ordering of thoughts and impressions.....the mind is engaged in that ordinary flow of associations, at the opposite pole from ‘thinking to some purpose.’” The principle of free association, according to Chatman, is then the basis of stream-of-consciousness.¹³ Such distinction of the two terms is an attempt to make the discussion in this chapter clear and sharp. It does not follow that interior monologue and stream-of-consciousness do not co-occur in narratives. Preceding Chatman, Scholes and Kellogg also try to distinguish stream-of-consciousness from interior monologue by using the associative principle: “[Stream-of-consciousness is] any presentation in literature of the illogical, ungrammatical, mainly associative patterns of human thought.”¹⁴

Free association, which is characteristically purposeless and not governed by a particular subject of thought, has to be separated from the kind of controlled association that can be found in nineteenth-century novels. The following example is a brief passage from *Ulysses*:

*He threw down among them [the gulls] a crumpled ball. Elijah thirty-two feet per sec is com. Not a bit. The ball bobbed unheeded on the wake of swells, floated under by the bridge piers.*¹⁵

The “he” in the first sentence is tossing away a handbill now crumpled into a paper ball. On the handbill is the legend “Elijah is coming,” which is referred to in the second sentence. Squeezed between “Elijah” and “is com” is a bit of science that Bloom once learned in school. i.e., the rate of speed of a falling body is “thirty-two feet per second.” “Not a bit,” the third sentence is another immediate response. The last sentence, like the first, is description of the external. Sentences two and three are then Bloom’s mental reaction in interior monologue. The presentation of this internal reaction is clearly based on the free associative principle. In this example, the interior monologue and stream-of-consciousness (free association) co-occur, but there is no reason why they must.

In comparison, the controlled type is characterized by purposiveness, orderliness, teleology, and the absence of digression. Here is an example from Jane Austen’s *Emma*:

How could she have been so deceived! He protested that he had never thought seriously of Harriet—never! . . .

*The picture! How eager he had been about the picture!--and the charade! And a hundred other circumstances; how clearly they had seemed to point at Harriet! To be sure, the charade, with its “ready wit”—but then, the “soft eyes”—in fact it suited neither; it was simply a jumble without taste or truth. Who could have seen through such thick-headed nonsense?*¹⁶

This passage is excerpted from a fairly long presentation of Emma’s consciousness. The internal debate is rendered without the explicit interference of the narrator. This moment plays a rather

significant role in the development of the plot, and is very much unlike the random association of thoughts, which is embedded and often not plot-related.¹⁷

The passage can also serve as an illustration of the free indirect form, a term known by about two dozen different names. In English alone, it has been variously called “indirect interior monologue,” “semi-indirect style,” “represented speech,” “represented speech and thought,” “independent form of indirect discourse,” “free indirect speech,” “free indirect discourse,” “free indirect style,” “substitutionary narration,” and “narrated monologue.”¹⁸ If free indirect form is terminologically the linguistic equivalent of interior monologue, then “narrated monologue”—first proposed by Dorrit Cohn—can be an appropriate literary term for free indirect form. “Narrated” accounts for the third person, the preterite and the subtle intervention of the narrator; “monologue” refers to “the rendering of a character’s thoughts in his own idiom.”¹⁹ According to Ann Banfield, the free indirect form, or narrated monologue, was quite widespread by mid-nineteenth century. In English, it can be found occasionally in George Eliot, Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, and is fully developed in Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott. It is increasingly employed in Henry James, George Meredith, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, and Katherine Mansfield.²⁰ Evidently most of these writers cannot be associated with stream-of-consciousness, which has always carried a suggestion of, if not an equation with, high modernism. Robert Humphrey, however, included free indirect form—which he calls “indirect interior monologue”—as one of the devices used in presenting stream-of-consciousness.²¹ Similarly, Ronald Carter has also considered free indirect speech as a stream-of-consciousness technique.²² This is a rather loose and problematic classification, for apparently we cannot

label a novel that merely contains the narrated monologue--say, *Pride and Prejudice* -- as stream-of-consciousness fiction. Free association, which always results in a seemingly random, illogical, and ungrammatical presentation, must then be maintained as an important guideline for the identifying of stream-of-consciousness.²³

Wang Meng and His Use of Free Indirect Discourse

With these guidelines, we can now move on to examine some of Wang Meng's stories which have been labelled by a number of Chinese critics as "stream-of-consciousness" fiction. These stories are: *Bu Li* (布礼) *Bolshevik Salute*; *Ye de Yan* (夜的眼) *Eyes of the Night*; *Fengzheng Piaodai* (风筝飘带) *Kite Streamers*; *Chun Zhi Sheng* (春之声) *Voice of Spring*; *Hudie* (蝴蝶) *Butterfly*; and *Hai de Meng* (海的梦) *Dreams of the Sea*.

These six stories are, in fact, generally regarded as controversial, as evidenced by the fact that they, among other stories written by Wang Meng between 1978 and 1980, were singled out and collected together with fourteen critical essays in a volume called *Ye de yan ji qita* (夜的眼及其他 *Eyes of the Night and Other Stories*) which was published in 1981.²⁴

Bolshevik Salute, a story which marked Wang Meng's re-emergence in 1979, is an autobiographical piece in which the protagonist has travelled the same long and tortuous road that Wang Meng had trodden since 1949. Like *Bolshevik Salute*, *Butterfly* is an ambitious story, which tries to deal with the first thirty years of the People's Republic of China through the experience of one character.

Again the narration of the events is not chronological, but jumps back and forth in time and space.

One of Wang Meng's most attractive stories is *Kite Streamers*, in which a pair of young lovers are lost, and have nowhere to go for their rendezvous until they stumble into a newly constructed empty high-rise building. The story begins with the young girl waiting for her boyfriend; her reveries lead into flash-backs of their first and subsequent meetings. Halfway through the narrative, the boyfriend finally shows up, and the two embark upon an almost futile search for shelter-to find a temporary haven for their love. The story defends the right of young lovers to find a place where they can be together in private in the city's overcrowded apartment blocks.

Voices of Spring is notable not only for its references to Germany (the title refers to a Strauss waltz popular in China) and its richly detailed descriptions of contemporary life, but also its skilful use of metaphor in portraying the China of the 1980s as a train where travellers are jammed into a boxcar hitched to a brand-new diesel engine. The story depicted a journey of the hero back to his hometown after he had visited Europe. The important feature of the story rested upon the hero's retrospective journey which paralleled his journey home. His thoughts were roaming back and forth between the present and the past, East and West, across time and space. In this way, the story broke up the limit and order of time and space in a way that gave the author a powerful means to maximise his imagination.

Narrated monologue, however, is the chief narrative means in *Eyes of the Night*. Unlike the ambitious scope of *Butterfly* and *Bolshevik Salute*, *Eyes of the Night* focuses entirely on a single

character's encounters and reactions in one night. The protagonist, a writer banished to the countryside for more than twenty years, returns to a city that he once inhabited to attend a symposium on creative writing. In his brief visit of one night, the writer witnesses intellectual liveliness, behavioural changes, and the "decadent" Western influence of the post-Mao era.²⁵ Despite the limited narrative time and scope, the story attempts to provide a slice of Chinese life and society in the late 1970s in a text of eight thousand words. But rather than a simple parading of naturalistic details, Wang Meng tries to filter the external description through the consciousness of the protagonist. In the large context of Chinese fiction, the story can be described as almost "plotless" but its accomplishment has shown other Chinese writers that plot is not the only means to deliver a critical message. Even more "plotless" is *Dreams of the Sea*, in which a rehabilitated expert of Western literature is granted the privilege of relaxing at a seaside resort reserved for senior cadres. True to his nature, the intellectual ruminates constantly, and narrated monologue is again used to render his thoughts. Reflecting on his tormented past and the tranquil but inert present, the intellectual is not engaged in any "action" except for a swim in the sea. At the end of the story, just before his sudden decision to leave the resort, the intellectual's gloomy view of himself and society is miraculously changed by his inadvertent witnessing of a young peasant couple enjoying the sea in the moonlight. The encounter is revitalizing because it not only reminds him of youthful yearning for the sea, but it also suggests that the future of the country will be in the hands of a young generation that also has its own dreams. What makes this story interesting amidst the voluminous output of Chinese fiction then is perhaps not the use of narrated monologue, but the "plotlessness," which indicates a shift

from the “plot-centred” narrative to the “character-centred” narrative.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, a close attention will now be given to two of the six short stories: *Eyes of the Night* and *Dream of the Sea* for further analysis.

Eyes of the Night

This story was first published in 1979²⁶. It portrays a middle-aged writer who comes back to the city for a literature conference after having lived in the countryside for twenty years. In the story we see the main protagonist, Chen Gao, trying to accomplish a task “through the back door,” for which he has to pay a visit to a high-ranking official. The story can roughly be divided into two parts. In the first half of the story, Chen’s quiet reflections are presented as he is on his way to the official’s house. The second half of the story contains some action and dialogue, as it depicts the actual visit, when Chen meets the official’s teenage son, who is hardly willing to receive him and shows a cynical attitude towards Chen’s message for his father.

The entire story is presented from a single point of view; it is exclusively the main protagonist whose perceptions, thoughts and reflections are presented. This can be illustrated simply by a short fragment from the description of Chen Gao’s bus ride in the beginning of the story.

*After many street lights, tree shadows and buildings and pedestrians had swept past, they were to arrive at another stop. . . .*²⁷

许多的街灯，树影，建筑物和行人掠过去了，又要到站了. . .

The description evidently represents the view of a bus passenger, who perceives the static surroundings as being in motion and ‘sweeping past’ (掠过去). This manner of description is fully in line with what William Tay has noted as one of the general characteristic of Wang Meng’s early post-1978 stories: a single-character point of view: a figural narrative situation.²⁸

Since the main character’s consciousness occupies such a central position in this story, we may characterize the narrative situation in the story as figural. This figural narrative situation is connected with some general elements of the form of free indirect discourse (FID) in this text.

The opening paragraph of the story introduces the main protagonist by means of one of his perceptions.

*The street lamps were all switched on at once of course. But Chen Gao always had the feeling that there were two streams of light shooting out above his head. On both sides of the street, the end of the stream was not visible. Scholar trees left simple but full shadows. The people waiting for the bus also cast multiple shadows, dark and light, on the sidewalk.*²⁹

路灯当然是一下子就全亮了的。但是陈杲总觉得是从他的头顶抛出去两道光流。街道两端，光河看不到头。槐树留下了扑质而又丰满的影子。等候公共汽车的人们也在人行道上放下了自己的浓的和淡的各人不止一个的影子。

The very first sentences present a fantasy of the main protagonist of the story, induced by his perception of reality. The first sentence (in FID) shows that he is aware of the unreal nature of his sensation. This is signalled semantically by ‘of course’ (当然) and by the emphasis added by the *shi...de* (是. 的) construction in *shi yixiaozi jiu quan liangle de* (were all switched on at once, 是一下子就全亮了的). The subject of the consciousness represented is not introduced until the second sentence, in which the narrator describes the character’s fantasy. The reader learns nothing of the character’s external appearance, but everything is seen through the character’s eyes and the narrative follows the stream of character’s thoughts and observations. There is a brief reference to the appearance of one of the minor characters in the story, the official’s son,³⁰ but this is an observation made by the main protagonist, so that it contributes to the personal tone of the development of the story.

Likewise, the fact that the main protagonist, Chen Gao, is waiting for a bus is not stated directly, but is revealed gradually through his observations. The fifth sentence of the above fragment contains an observation concerning people waiting for a bus, and the following paragraph, comprising Chen Gao’s impressions and associations, opens with a small series of impressions of the traffic, beginning with buses, big and small. After Chen’s musings, which take more than half a page, the reader is informed of the arrival of the bus. This statement is combined with Chen’s perception of it: its

colour and its length. Again, the information that Chen Gao boards the bus is revealed through Chen's own perception, the emphasis being put on the difficulty of boarding on account of the crowd.

Thus, events are filtered through the character's consciousness. In the majority of the first half of the story, there is little action: Chen Gao waits for the bus, rides the bus to its terminus, has to wait a while to find the house which he wants to visit and then again waits at the front door for someone to confirm the correctness of the address. During all these events, the passing of time is suggested by interior monologues, through the presentation of Chen's musings on his surroundings, on the society he is living in, or his own past.³¹ The second half of the story contains more events in the narrated present. This part of the story contains Chen's perceptions of events and his reaction to them, as well as dialogue. It is especially in the interior monologues in the first half of the story that longer sections in FID can be found. Shorter fragments of FID are present throughout the story.

The FID passages in the story are relatively sparsely marked with signals of the device. This is due partly to the fact that in a figural narrative situation, the character's perspective is preponderant and needs no extra signalling. Moreover, the interior monologues, in particular, usually show the character in a quiet state. In other words, there is no heightened emotion, which would call for special signals.

In the first category of signals of FID (the system of grammatical person), the most striking phenomenon is an instance of a sudden shift to first-person sentences in a third-person environment.³²

As the comrade from the remote small town seemed to have 'discerned' his frame of mind, he received one telegram

*after the other from the small town as soon as he had arrived in the city, urging him to attend to the matter quickly. After all, it's not for me. After all, I never rode that Shanghai car, and I never shall either. Encouraging himself, he had passed the main street with its river of street lights . . . and . . . he had arrived.*³³

边远的小镇的同志似乎‘洞察’了他的心理，所以他刚到大城市不久就接连收到了来自小镇的电报，催他快的去讨个结果。反正我也不是为了个人。反正我从来也没坐过那辆上海牌，今后也不会坐。他鼓励着自己，经过了街灯如川的大路。 . . 和 . . 来到了。

The whole passage is reminiscence by Chen Gao, which sums up the central conflict of the story. His errand is to try and obtain some spare parts for the Shanghai limousine of his remote home town, which had some defect and could not be repaired locally. In order to do this, Chen Gao has to visit a high official and use the ‘back door,’ much to his dislike. The first sentence of the passage shows the pressure to which he has yielded; then Chen’s reluctance is highlighted by the direct presentation of the arguments he uses to appease his conscience. After the two first-person sentences, the narrator takes over again in an explanatory phrase followed by a short summary of the events of the narrated present in the story, which brings the reader back from the character’s memory to the course of events.

The shift from third-person narration to first-person presentation is made abruptly, without any preparation in the context; the explanation is given afterwards. It might be assumed that, since this

passage is central to the story, the intended effect of the shift is to shock the reader, as it were, to elicit heightened attention.

The main protagonist's dislike for his task is also expressed in another passage, prior to the one just discussed. This passage is marked by portative constructions, which supply some fairly striking syntactic signals of FID. The narrator provides the reader with a clue to the interpretation of this portion of Chen Gao's consciousness in an introductory sentence:

Chen Gao seemed to have some regrets on walking in this maze of apartment buildings. He really shouldn't have left that bright street, he shouldn't have left that crowded, busy and cheerful bus, how nice it would be to advance along a wide street, everybody together, but now, he had come here alone. Or else, he should have stayed at the guesthouse and not have gone out at all, that would have been even better. . . .³⁴

行走在这迷宫一样的居民楼里，陈杲似乎有一点后悔。真不应该离开那一条明亮的大街，不应该离开那个拥挤拥挤的热闹而愉快的公共汽车，大家一起在大路上前进，这是多么好啊，然而现在呢，他一个人来到这里。要不就呆在招待所，根本不要出来，那就更好。 . . .

The first sentence is a good example of a figural colouring of narratorial discourse. The sentence is attributable to the narrator, who describes Chen Gao's feeling of regret: "Chen Gao seemed to have some regrets" (陈杲似乎有一点后悔)， but the description of the buildings provides a strong figural colouring. "This maze of apartment buildings" (这迷宫一样的居民楼) represents the subjective evaluation by the

character, accompanied by his complex duties. ‘This’ (这) refers to the character’s spatial position.

The portative construction in the second sentence is rather abundantly marked by several signals. Emphasis is indicated at the beginning of the sentence: “He really shouldn’t have left” (真不应该离开). There is no personal pronoun in the Chinese text; the first occurrence of one is “but now, he” (然而现在呢, 他). The ‘now’ (现在) in this phrase is also deictic, pointing to the character’s temporal position. In the same phrase, as well as the preceding one, there are modal particles. “How nice it would be . . . but now” (这是多么好啊, 然而现在呢), in which *a* (啊) and *ne* (呢) are modal particles with emotive function. These particles are rare in this text, so in this passage we find one of the few instances of them. This is in keeping with the general tone of the story: a quiet flow of the character’s consciousness with only a few stronger emotions. The passage quoted is one of these more strongly emotive sections of the story.

The passage mentioned is part of a longer paragraph, with some more syntactic means to signal heightened emotion. For instance, Chen Gao’s reluctance concerning the task he has to perform focuses on his own personality, after he first reflects on the awkwardness of the matter: “it was just that he wasn’t the right man to do it” (只是他办起来不合适罢了). The expression ‘it was just that’ (只是. 罢了) is a construction from the spoken language, with emotive function. Furthermore, this paragraph contains a string of related words and expressions as a signal of heightened emotion. The same qualifying adjective or adverb is repeated, with the overall effect of strong emphasis:

*But now, he had oddly taken the bus for quite a while, to find an odd address and call on an odd person to deal with some odd business. In fact, the business wasn't odd at all. . .*³⁵

然而现在呢，他莫名其妙地坐了好长时间的车，要按一个莫名其妙的地址去找一个莫明其妙的人办一件莫名其妙的事。其实事一点也不莫明其妙。 . . 。

The emphasis added by repetition of 'odd' (莫名其妙) and the emotive negation at the beginning of the second sentence "in fact, the business wasn't odd at all" (其实事一点也不莫明其妙) increase the overall impression of the inner deliberation of the character.

In the category of semantic signals of FID, subjective semantics expressing the character's perceptions can be observed in several of the passages quoted above. In the fragment concerning the 'odd business' for instance, it is clear from the context that this qualification expresses the character's feelings.

The variations expressed by means of the character's subjective semantics can be illustrated by the varying names used for Chen Gao's home town. Chen Gao does not live in the city which he is observing at the beginning of the story. This is stated rather soon, in a long FID inner monologue giving Chen Gao's impressions of his surroundings while he is waiting for the bus. He notices the many cars, the sounds and the modern way people dress: the observations of a person unfamiliar with contemporary city life. Then, after the statement that Chen has not visited the big city for twenty years, his reflections turn to his home town:

***For more than twenty years, he had stayed in a remote small town in a remote border province, where one third of the street lamps were not lit. . . .*³⁶**

二十多年，他呆在一个边远的省份的一个边远的小镇，那里的路灯有三分之一是不亮的. . . .

In this passage, Chen Gao's thoughts turn back to the street lamps, the topic of the opening sentence of the story, after a small digression; Chen Gao's home town is called "a remote small town in a remote border province" (边远的省份的一个边远的小镇). An abridged form of this is repeated in the other instances in the story of Chen's comparing the big city to his own home town: "a remote small town". Chen Gao makes several other, mildly ironic comparisons during his reflections. While riding the bus, he reflects on the pretty girl with the clear voice who sells the tickets:

***In Chen Gao's remote small home town, it would be strange if a girl like this were not chosen as the member of a cultural troupe.*³⁷**

在陈杲的边远的小镇，这样的姑娘不被选到文工团去报幕才怪。

The expression is combined here with the full name of the character, "Chen Gao's remote small town" (陈杲的边远的小镇). Then, Chen Gao overhears two young workers discussing democracy, and he reflects on the popularity of this topic:

*In the big city, discussing democracy was as widespread as discussing legs of mutton in that remote small town.*³⁸

在大城市谈论民主就和在那个边远的小镇谈论羊腿把子一样普遍。

Now, we have “that remote small town” in combination with deictic ‘that’ (那个). Finally, Chen Gao compares the noise of the city at night with the quiet of his home town:

*In the remote small town what one heard most frequently in the evening was dogs barking. . . .*³⁹

在边远的小镇，晚间听到的最多的是狗叫. . .

This time, “the remote small town” has no qualifiers and the ironical comparison is longer than shown here.

Somewhat later in the story, Chen Gao recalls how his awkward task was given to him by an official at home. The general tone of this recollection is not ironical but neutral. “. . . before he left, a leading comrade from that remote place. . . .”⁴⁰ In this case, a slightly different expression is used: ‘that remote place’ (那个边远的地方). This fact becomes relevant when, after some further musings, Chen thinks of the telegrams he received upon his arrival, urging him to carry out his task: “As the comrade from the remote small town seemed to have ‘discerned’ his frame of mind”⁴¹ This passage, quoted more extensively above, has the same tone of mild irony,

which is further enhanced by the use of ‘discerned’ (洞察). In this context, readers also find ‘remote small town’.

The same expression is found in a short inner remark by Chen Gao, also ironical in tone, which is crucial to the story. Chen has just been admitted to the apartment of the high official by the latter’s son and notices a special type of lock on an item of furniture:

*Quite a few good friends in the remote small town had asked Chen Gao to buy special locks for them, but he had not found any. There, the fashion in big cupboards was just on the ascendant.*⁴²

边远的小镇有好多好友托付陈杲给他们代买弹珠，
但是没有买着。那里做大立柜的高潮方兴未艾。

The second sentence here, especially, confirms the ironical tone of the section. The first sentence, which has ‘remote small town’, offers the central problem of the story in miniature form, with a negative outcome, thus foreshadowing the negative outcome of Chen Gao’s task.

There is a last occurrence of the term in a highly emotive passage at the end of the story. When Chen Gao leaves the apartment in a state of crisis when his mission has failed, he hears a fragment of Hungarian music. This induces what has been termed a ‘stylistic variety’.⁴³ He imagines a blue mountain lake surrounded by snowy mountains, with his home town on its border. In this case, the thought of Chen Gao’s home town is not at all ironic, but serves as comfort in a time of crisis. In this way, the other occurrences of this symbol are put in perspective by extension. In other words, this confirms the

endearing, rather than distancing effect of the mildly comical reflections concerning the town.

As regards the other semantic feature, modality, it is sometimes difficult to establish its origin. Whenever this is the case, context must decide whether modality originates with the character or the narrator. In the following passage, the origin of modality is shown clearly in a subsequent sentence. The passage directly follows Chen's reflection on the comparable popularity of discussion concerning legs of mutton in his home town, and the conversational topic of democracy in the city.

*This was probably because the meat supplies in the city were quite sufficient and people didn't have to worry about legs of mutton. This really made one envious. Chen Gao smiled.*⁴⁴

这大概是因为大城市的肉食供应比较充足吧，人们不必为羊腿操心。这真让人羡慕。陈杲微笑了。

'Probably' (大概) in the first sentence implies that Chen Gao's explanation of the compared topics discussion is presented as possible: it is not absolute. Modality is reinforced in the Chinese text by the particle *ba* at the end of the phrase. The last sentence describes a facial expression by Chen Gao, which serves as a strong contextual signal of FID, so that the modality in 'probably' can be attributed to the character.

Contextual signals to mark FID occur frequently in this text. In the example just given, such a contextual signal is placed after a FID passage. Contextual signals preceding a passage of FID have been

found as well, for instance in the already mentioned ‘stylistic variety’. A piece of music from a tape recorder induces Chen to see images of his home town in front of his eyes.

*Chen Gao felt faint; about to reach the door, he suddenly stopped and involuntarily cocked his ears; the tape recorder was playing some real music, the waltz “Ball sirens” by the Hungarian composer Lehár.*⁴⁵

陈杲昏昏然，临走到门口的时候他忽然停下了脚，不由得侧起了耳朵，录音机里放送的是真正的音乐，匈牙利作曲家韦哈尔的<<舞会圆舞曲>>。

‘Stopped’（停下了脚）and ‘cocked his ears’（侧起了耳朵）signal to the reader that the shift to FID is on the point of being made. In the next phrase, ‘real music’（真正的音乐）is Chen Gao’s evaluation of this tune. Up to that moment, by contrast, he has reflected on the Hong Kong popular songs he then heard as something unfamiliar, as a feature of the big city specifically. The shift to FID in the second part of this sentence is sustained in subsequent following sentences, which depict Chen’s vision of the beautiful scenery at home.

We may say that all the categories of signals of FID are represented in this text. The careful handling of semantic features, as in the case of the expression used to indicate Chen Gao’s home town, is an interesting particularity of this text. On the other hand, the absence of large numbers of exclamatory sentences and questions is indicative of the generally smooth flow of the character’s consciousness.

Functions of FID in Eyes of the Night

The function of FID in creating smooth transitions between narrator's and character's discourse is shown predominantly by shifts from narrator's discourse to FID and vice versa. Since there is not very much dialogue in this story, full character's discourse is not abundant and FID is seldom preceded or followed by direct discourse.

On the contrary, there are longer passages of interior monologue with recurrent shifts from FID to narrator's discourse and back again. This may occur even within a single sentence, as shown by the following example from a passage when Chen Gao fails to jump across a ditch in the street on the way to his visit.

Make a detour or jump? No, he couldn't give in to old age yet. Then he took a few steps back, one, two, three, no good, one foot seemed to get stuck in the sand, but he had started to jump already, so he didn't jump high and fell into the ditch.⁴⁶

绕还是跳？不，还不能服老。於是他后退了几步，一，二，三，不好，一只腿好像陷在沙子里，但已经跳了起来，不是腾空而起，而是落到沟里。

The sentence opens in FID; then the narrator takes over with "then he took a few steps back," followed by a shift back to FID; and the sentence ends with narrator's discourse again, starting from "but he had started to jump already."

In conformity with the general trend described in this thesis before, the narrator's attitude towards the character whose consciousness is so amply presented can be described as empathy. The general tone of humour in the story can be attributed to the specific nature of the character's reflections, rather than to any irony in the narrator's attitude. The character's background as a banished writer who spent more than twenty years in the countryside, a fate which has certain similarities with that of the author of the story, makes the relationship between narrator and character a special one. It would make the reader expect empathy rather than irony, but the humorous presentation which is evident in the story makes it necessary to take a closer look at the narrator's attitude, especially at the crucial moment in the story.

Chen Gao's task makes him feel uncomfortable, but he has not refused to perform it. This fact is presented as follows:

*There was no reason to refuse this old comrade's request, nor did Chen Gao, who understood the importance of legs of mutton, doubt the necessity of handing a letter to somebody. Dealing with a matter while he was on the spot was a duty he evidently had to perform. . . .*⁴⁷

没有理由拒绝这位老同志的委托，而懂得羊腿的重要性的陈杲也就不对带信找人的必要性发生怀疑。顺便为当地办点事当然是他应尽的义务. . .

The description of Chen Gao as someone "who understood the importance of legs of mutton" works humorously and one may wonder whether there is not some irony in the narrator's attitude. As we have seen earlier, the legs of mutton are the equivalent in the countryside of

democracy in the city as a topic of prime importance in life. This comparison is presented as Chen's own idea on the matter. The reflection concerning the issue is followed by "Chen Gao smiled," which means that the humorous effect of the comparison is in fact acknowledged by the character. There is no distance between the character's view and the presentation by the narrator.

A little later in the text, the same legs of mutton are linked to the writing of fiction. The mixed reception to Chen Gao's new fiction work, which is compared to his early work in all cases, is followed by an internal comment.

*Paying too much attention to legs of mutton might cause one's technique of fiction writing to deteriorate; on the other hand, understanding the importance and urgency of legs of mutton was a great advance and a great acquisition.*⁴⁸

过分注意羊腿的人小说技巧就会退化的，但是懂得了羊腿的重要性和迫切性却是一大进步和一大收获。

The fact that this comment is indeed attributable to Chen Gao is shown by the ensuing recollection of an accident Chen witnessed on the train to the city. In this accident, a man lost his life literally as a result of his eagerness to sell legs of mutton. In other words, the first half of Chen's reflection derives from his personal experience. Contextual signals in a sentence of the narrator's discourse at the end of the paragraph confirm that Chen Gao is the source of these reflections.

Reference to these earlier reflections of Chen Gao's can thus be seen as a natural thought by the character himself in the circumstances.

The narrator's attitude must be regarded as humorous accentuation, not irony.

The type of consciousness rendered in FID passages here is mainly the quiet flow of the character's thoughts during times when he moves to different locations. Sometimes it is the character's quiet perception of his surroundings which is rendered in FID. The character's impressions of the city, for instance, when he waits at the bus stop at the beginning of the story, take the shape of series of words rendering the more or less independent, yet orderly, visual perceptions, to quickly follow each other, and interrupted from time to time by some inner comment. The same pattern of visual perceptions and a few inner comments is found at the beginning of the meeting between Chen Gao and the official's son just after Chen has entered the apartment. In the latter case, it is striking that Chen Gao's perceptions are still quiet and orderly despite the tone of heightened emotion which he experiences after the unfriendly reception.

The flow of thought covers reflections on several subjects, sometimes of a rather philosophical nature, such as Chen's musings on democracy and legs of mutton. Chen Gao's thoughts may also take the form of memories, usually of the recent past, like his train ride to the city or his experience at the writers' congress, and, very briefly, of a more remote past, like the time when he was banished to the countryside in the fifties.

Memories are not rendered in FID exclusively; sometimes they are presented by means of direct discourse (DD). More highly emotive passages often show DD as a mode of presentation. The gist of Chen Gao's speech at the writers' congress, for example, is summarized in one sentence of DD. A literal rendering is given of Chen's recollection

of his friend's request to hand a letter to a high official in the city. The precise words are quoted in a longer DD passage. It even contains an embedded quotation of words in the third person. DD rendering is functional in this case, as it underlines the strong impression that this occasion made on Chen Gao.

In a context with more dialogue, in the second part of the story, concerning the meeting between Chen Gao and the official's teenage son, the narrator sometimes intrudes with explanatory comments. Sometimes the source of these comments is not evident. In one case, it is the speaker of the DD sentence himself (i.e., Chen Gao), who comments mentally on his own use of the polite form of address, *nin* (您) instead of the more informal *ni* (你).

“Are you [nin] a relative of comrade xxx, (it looked as if he was xxx's son; in fact, he didn't at all have to say ‘You’ [nin] to someone so much his junior) would you [nin].....”⁴⁹

您是不是xxx同志家里的人，（估计是xxx的儿子，其实对这样一个晚辈完全不必用‘您’）您能不能. . .

The comment inserted in parentheses can be seen as FID expressing an inner comment by the speaker, who worries about his own formulations. This feeling of the character's is developed later, as we shall see, so that this interpretation is corroborated. There is another passage in which there are two such parenthetical remarks, which seem less warranted. The speaker, in this case, is the young man.

“Is this xxx (the person mentioned was the leader from the outlying district) my father’s comrade-in-arms (note: until now he hadn’t introduced himself, his words had not yet borne out who his father was)? Why haven’t I heard of him from my father?”⁵⁰

“这个xxx (说的是边远地区的那位领导)，是我爸爸的战友吗（按，到现在为止他没有作自我介绍，从理论上还无法证明他的爸爸是谁）？我怎么没听我爸爸说过？”

The first parenthetical remark explains to the reader the identity of the person indicated as ‘xxx.’ This information is totally useless to Chen Gao, who is the only character whose consciousness is being rendered in this text, because he is present on the scene and hears the real name of the person. “This means that the explanation cannot but be attributed to the narrator, so that this is a case of narratorial intrusion.”⁵¹

The second parenthetical remark is more equivocal. The remark itself can be as a comment on the fact that the young man’s relationship to the official Chen is trying to contact is now finally certain. This information is relevant to Chen Gao, as is confirmed by the fact that he actually uses it in his reply: “maybe your father once mentioned him...” Thus, the parenthetical remark can be seen as an inner comment by Chen Gao. However, the introduction of this remark by ‘note’ [an] is a strongly narratorial device, which is not fitting for FID rendering of the character’s consciousness. Consequently, although Chen Gao can be seen as the source of this comment, it is embedded in a narrator’s phrase, so that the total parenthetical remark has to be qualified as a narratorial intrusion. The embedding phrase is

conspicuously superfluous in this case, since it strongly emphasizes the interruptive effect of the parenthetical remarks.

In view of the story's tight construction, involving symmetric arrangement of certain events and perceptions which occur on the protagonist's way to the official's apartment and on his way back (which was noted by Williams Tay), it is significant that both the first and last sentences of the story are FID, conveying representations of the protagonist's consciousness. Thus, this is a case of things coming full circle.

Dream of the Sea

The second story by Wang Meng to be analyzed in this chapter has a more abstract meaning. The main protagonist in the story, Miao Keyan, is a 52-year-old translator and specialist in foreign literature, who has suffered years of persecution in the successive political campaigns of the PRC. He has always been attracted to the sea, but it has always remained a dream to him; he has never had the opportunity to see it with his own eyes. After his rehabilitation in 1979, his work unit arranges a holiday for him at a seaside resort. Miao is deeply moved by the sight of the object of his long-standing dream. He likes to swim and since he used to be a good swimmer, he ventures far out into the waves. But when he is far from the beach, he is stricken with a cramp in one of his legs, right on the spot where he was injured during his imprisonment. By a tremendous effort he succeeds in reaching the shore, but the incident makes him realized that his ability to swim is severely restricted by his age and by the facts of his life. He further realizes that his dream of the sea in itself is unattainable and that dreams are associated with youth, so he decides to leave. The night

before his departure, he goes out to the beach to watch the beautiful, moonlit sea one last time. When he expresses his love for the sea by calling aloud, he disturbs a couple of young lovers, who disappear in the sea by swimming away towards the horizon. When he leaves the next morning, many days earlier than he had originally intended, Miao Keyan is completely satisfied, because the young couple have acted in accordance with his new understanding. They combine youth and love, so it is appropriate for them to swim towards the moon, to try and realize their dream.

The events in the narrated present of the story are extremely restricted. The story mainly presents the protagonist's reflections, which bring him to the insight that realizing a dream is the same as losing a dream. His reflections are tinged with melancholy because he has been able to realize so few of the dreams of his young years, as a consequence of his long imprisonment due to political campaigns. Since so many Chinese intellectuals of his generation share this fate of being hampered in the development of their lives on account of historical circumstances, the general theme of the story can be seen as the fate of a victimized generation.

The framework provided by the time structure of the narrated present is very loose. The protagonist comes to his new understanding during a visit of only five days. The presentation of his reflections is not related to specific points within this lapse of time. The time frame is limited mainly to the beginning of Miao Keyan's stay, when he gets off the train and first perceives the sea from the car that takes him to the guesthouse, and the end of his visit, i.e., the night before his departure and a brief scene in the taxi which drives him back to the station.

The protagonist's reflections in between the specified points of time in the narrated present take the form of an ongoing stream of the character's consciousness. Significantly, quite a few paragraphs open with conjunctions, suggesting a connection with the preceding section. For instance, Miao has a recollection of a story by a European writer on some young people who finally set foot on a small island they had always admired from afar, and discover that there is nothing there but stones. This paragraph, which is important in the story, ends as follows:

The story depicted with great brilliance this pain of losing a dream because of having found it. How much more so for Miao Keyan who had already passed the age of dreaming!

*So he wanted to leave. He had dreamt for fifty years, but stayed only five days. Although it was really like heaven here.*⁵²

小说极为精彩地刻划了这种因为找到了梦所以失去来梦的痛苦。何况，缪可言已经过了作梦的年纪。

所以，他想离去。梦想了五十年，只呆了五天。虽然这里就象天堂。

Miao Keyan's recollection of the story is followed by his reflection, in FID, that it is indeed applicable to his own situation. The new paragraph opens with 'so' (所以) to suggest that the stream of Miao's thoughts continues. Sometimes, a new paragraph opens with Miao's inner reaction to his own thoughts in the previous section. For

example, Miao Keyan's emotion at beholding at last the sea he has dreamt of for so long is followed quite soon by a strong sense that it is too late to indulge in dreams of the sea. This feeling is expressed by a string of questions and is followed by an inner reaction.

*Where was the warmth of tears of joy and sorrow?
He felt ashamed on account of the loving care shown to him
by the organization and by the comrades and old friends.*⁵³

欢乐和悲痛的眼泪的热度在哪里？

他愧对组织上和同志们，老友们对他的关怀。

The uneasiness caused by the melancholy following his first joy, as expressed by: "He felt ashamed on account of" (他愧对), serves as a link to further reflections on the care for his well-being on the part of his superiors and colleagues.

The protagonist's reflections are presented mainly in a mixture of narrator's discourse and FID, with short portions of DD. The signals which mark the FID passages in this text show some particularities, which will be reviewed in some detail.

In the opening line of the story, the absence of personal pronouns produces a special effect which can not be rendered in western languages. It has the effect of suggesting a human presence which is not explicitly mentioned. In English the opening lines read as follows:

*When [he] got off the train, [he] caught the end of a
thunderstorm. Inside the compartment, it [had been] very*

*warm chaotic and noisy. As soon as [he] was on the platform, it felt pleasantly cool, and calm and empty.*⁵⁴

下车的时候赶上了雷阵雨的尾巴。车厢里热烘烘，乱糟糟，迷腾腾的。一到站台，只觉得又凉爽，又安静，又空荡。

The personal pronouns are placed in brackets to show that they are absent in the Chinese text.

In the second sentence, there is a similar indefiniteness which cannot be rendered in English because no tense is specified;

（车厢里热烘烘，乱糟糟，迷腾腾的。） It is not until some sentences later that the protagonist, Miao Keyan, is introduced. These sentences describe the scent of conifers in the air and the sound of the talking and laughter of some foreign tourists who are leaving another section of the train.

The first several sentences, especially, suggest the presence of the character as the centre of the perceptions described, without mentioning him by name, which may be seen as a gradual preparation of the reader for the introduction of the main protagonist. It is also clear that, although these perceptions are being presented in narrator's discourse, the selection of the perceptions described strongly suggests they are the character's. Thus, the absence of personal and possessive pronouns contributes to the suggestive preparation of the reader for the introduction of the character by the narrator.

When personal pronouns *are* used, they sometimes give rise to interpretation problems. This occurs specifically where second-person

personal and possessive pronouns are present. The occurrence of the personal pronoun ‘you’ (你) in a third-person environment may be ambiguous. It may have an impersonal meaning: ‘one’. In that case it is a signal of FID. But it must often be interpreted as a form of direct address or self-address, and hence as a sudden shift to DD. This occurs, for instance, in the beginning of this story, in a passage presenting Miao Keyan’s recollection of a children’s song he used to sing, and which contains all the elements of his dreams: flying, the ocean and fearlessness. Miao Keyan grieves on his own past, which is far removed from such dreams.

At the age of fifty-two, he had not obtained love; he had not seen the sea, not to speak of flying. . . .On the contrary, he had almost been engulfed by storm and waves. Where were you? Brave young captain? ⁵⁵

五十二岁了，他没有得到爱情，他没有见过海洋，更谈不上飞翔。 然而他却几乎被风浪所吞噬。你在哪里呢？年轻勇敢的船长？

The third-person system in the first sentence is indicated as explicitly in the Chinese text as in the English translation. In the last sentence, the captain from the children’s song is addressed directly, with ‘you’ (你): 你在哪里呢? This sentence marks the end of the paragraph. The following section opens with a number of sentences in the third-person system again. In this case, the shift to a second-person pronoun must be interpreted as a sudden shift from FID to DD.

In some cases, both interpretations are equally possible: second-person personal and possessive pronouns have been found

which can be interpreted in either way. In the following fragment giving Miao's reflections while he watches the horizon, there is an impersonal pronoun immediately preceding a number of second-person pronouns:

*But looking sideways, the two lines were vertical and the scenery on the shore gave one a real feeling of distance. Then, your visual impression was very different.*⁵⁶

而侧面看过去呢，两条线是纵向的，岸上的景物又给人以距离的实感。於是，你的“观”感就大不相同了。

The context uses the third-person system. The presence of 'one' (人) in "gave one a real feeling of distance" (给人以距离的实感) may induce one to interpret the second-person pronoun 'your' (你的) in the next sentence, "your visual impression was very different" (你的观感就大不相同了。) having the same general meaning of an impersonal construction. In that case, 'your' must be seen as a signal of spoken language and, thus, as a signal of FID. On the other hand, this second-person pronoun may just as well be seen as a form of self-address by the character; in that case, there is a switch from FID to DD.

Syntactic features of FID occupy a prominent position in this text. Exclamatory sentences, deliberative and rhetorical questions, strings of related words or expressions and repetitions all occur fairly frequently. These syntactic features, which all indicate heightened emotion, are important not only in this story but in other works by Wang Meng as well.

Following his reflections on the limits to his vision of the sea, imposed by the horizon, Miao Keyan is overcome, sometime toward dusk, by the desire to swim to the point where the sea is connected to the sky. That is the point where he imagines the sea, the sky and boundlessness are truly situated. The search for such a point ultimately forms the real content of his dream of the sea.

*Stars, the sun, clouds, the free wind, the dragon king, mermaids, white whales, water nymphs, were all there, were all there!*⁵⁷

星星，太阳，彩云，自由的风，龙王。美人鱼，白鲸，碧波仙子，全在那里呢，全在那里呢！

This exclamatory sentence at the end of the paragraph expresses heightened emotion, not only in the exclamatory syntax, but also in the string of words at the beginning and the repeated phrase at the end. The intensifying effect is increased in the Chinese text by the particle *ne*, which is an element of the repeated phrase: “were all there, were all there!” (全在那里呢，全在那里呢!). The elements enumerated at the beginning constitute a series of intangible or unattainable things, associations by the character, which gives a clear impression of the abstract nature of the dream’s content. The fragment is part of the passage which describes how the protagonist is brought to give up his efforts to fulfil his dream of the sea. So, heightened emotion is appropriate here.

The rest of the passage shows some other devices used in this story to express heightened emotion. The sentence just quoted, which is part of a longer FID section, is followed by a shift to DD. The DD sentence is marked by quotation marks; it has the form of a question

and includes emotive particles. The protagonist wonders where his soul, his illusions and the sea of his dreams are. After this question, there is a shift back to FID:

“ . . . and sea from childhood dreams of love, where are you?”

But, he wasn't able to swim there any longer, that damned left calf! Those fifty-two years past which couldn't be changed into twenty-five!

Maybe it was better not to swim over? ⁵⁸

“ 离奇的幻想和童稚的思恋的梦中的海啊，你在哪里？ ”

然而，他游不过去了，那该死的左腿的小腿肚子！
那无法变成二十五的五十个逝去了的年头！

也许，不游过去更好一些？

This section still shows heightened emotion in its syntax, with two exclamations followed by a question, and there is the powerful semantic signal of spoken language in ‘damned’ (该死的).

The story then moves on to dreams found that turn into dreams lost. This is the FID section which has been described above, presenting the protagonist's decision to leave the seaside resort. The passage described is central to ‘Dream of the Sea’ in that it describes the actual change of mind of the main protagonist. Syntactic devices to

express heightened emotion in the FID sections in this passage are: exclamations, a deliberative question and a string of words. The shift in the middle of this passage, from FID to DD and back again, is also characteristic of this story.

Strings of related words or expressions are a well known device in Wang Meng's work for indicating heightened emotion. They may take the form of a string of deliberative questions, as in the description of the moment of tension just preceding Miao Keyan's first confrontation with the sea:

*The sea, the sea! Was it Gorki's sea before the storm? Was it Andersen's splendid, many-faced and bizarre sea? Or the sea as depicted by Jack London or Hemingway, which he had translated himself, working his heart out? Maybe it was the old sea of the Arabs in the Scheherazade suite by Rimsky Korsakov?*⁵⁹

海，海！是高尔基的风暴雨前的海吗？是安徒生的绚烂多姿，光怪陆离的海吗？还是他亲自呕心沥血地翻译过的杰克·伦敦或海明威所描绘的海呢？也许，那时李姆斯基·柯萨考夫的《谢赫拉萨达组曲》里的古老的，阿拉伯人的海吧？

The protagonist's thoughts are described here as a series of comparisons with the descriptions by a collection of artists that a specialist in world literature may be expected to know. Emotions felt by the protagonist are described by means of an enumeration of impressions which all take the same form: deliberative question.

These strings often contain some element of repetition as well, which can be illustrated by a fragment describing Miao's feelings of familiarity for the sea at the beginning of his stay. Miao's relationship with the sea is described as a close and long-standing friendship with a woman.

She had never changed heart, she had never tired, she had never left, she always welcomed him, held him, kissed him, stroked him, struck him, collided with him, washed him, pressed him down.⁶⁰

她没有变心，她从没有疲劳，她从没有告退，她永远在迎接他，拥抱他，吻他，抚摸他，敲击他，冲撞他，梳洗他，压他。

This sequence of impressions of Miao's feelings for the sea shows formal parallelism for the elements enumerated. First, 'she had never,' (她从没有) followed by a verb; then the positive characteristic in a series of verbs of one or two characters in the Chinese text, with repetition of the object 'him' (他).

The metaphor of the lady-friend for the sea is used only in this passage. In other cases, the relationship between the sea and the protagonist is rather perceived as that of mother and son. The metaphor as it is used here links together two of his youthful aspirations, the sea on the one hand and love on the other. It is situated in the story after Miao's recollection of his decision that he was too old to marry and too old for love; it contributes to Miao's eventual realization that he is too old for dreams of the sea as well.

FID passages with questions and strings of related words or expressions are important elements for the expression of states of heightened emotion in the main protagonist.

Subjective semantics in FID passage are obviously important in this story. They have been shown in several previous illustrative passages. A powerful instance of subjective semantics occurs in the fragment quoted with Miao swearing at his weak leg, which prevents him from swimming far and thus from reaching out for his dream. “That damned left calf!”（该死的左腿的小腿肚子！） clearly expresses the protagonist’s subjective feelings on the matter.

Function of FID in Dream of the Sea

The serious tone in a large part of this story is one of the striking features in the text with respect to the functions of FID. Some humour can only be found towards the end of the story, when the protagonist, supposing nobody else to be present, utters his love for the sea aloud and disturbs a young couple on the beach. However, the tone of narration in these passages remains completely serious. Miao Keyan’s reaction is described as one of satisfaction and joy, in addition to his embarrassment:

Young people sitting on the moonlit beach together leaning closely against each other, this was very good. Sea and moon needed youth. Youth also needed sea and moon. But who were they?⁶¹

年轻人在月夜海滨，依偎着坐在一起，这很好。海和月需要青春。青春也需要海和月。但他们是谁呢？

If the scene has a humorous effect it is the unexpectedness of the event which produces this effect, not the style of narration. When Miao Keyan hears sounds of swimming a little later, and is aware that it is the same young couple who are swimming towards the horizon, just as he had wanted to do himself, his satisfaction actually increases. He feels that they are swimming in his place, so that his dream of the sea is eventually fulfilled by substitution. This turn of events, which prepares the positive ending of the story, may be seen in the light of a general tendency in Wang Meng's early post-1978 stories.⁶²

In '*Dream of the Sea*' the narrator's attitude towards the main protagonist, as contrasted with '*Eyes of the Night*', is completely empathetic; there is no humorous accentuation on the part of the narrator.

As a contrast with the presentation of the main protagonist, the taxi driver is described omnisciently. The amount of text devoted to this minor character is extremely small, but on account of the position of his appearance at the beginning and the end of the story, his role provides a frame to the story. At the story's end, the driver supposes, in DD, that Miao Keyan is disappointed about his stay. The narrator then intrudes to explain:

This driver was a psychologist who knew people. Moreover, he had been told already that Miao Keyan was an old-fashioned, unattractive old bachelor. But this time he was wrong. Miao Keyan answered:

*"No, this place is wonderful, really wonderful."*⁶³

“不，这个地方好极了，实在是好极了！”

This effect of surprise in the very last lines is prepared, as it were, by the use of omniscient narration, a mode which contrasts with the rest of the text.

Conclusion

Since Wang Meng occupies a prominent position in the modernization of Chinese fiction, his work has received attention in books and articles by a number of western scholars. In a classification of Wang's early post-1977 stories by Philip Williams, *Eyes of the Night* and *Dream of the Sea* are both mentioned as concentrating on the psychological self-discovery of the main protagonist.⁶⁴ As Williams rightly remarks, these stories "emphasis the immediate environment's impact on the protagonist's inner life."⁶⁵ However, political themes are not absent in them. Even in *Dream of the Sea*, which Williams calls "Wang's most apolitical story,"⁶⁶ such themes are present in the background. In his engaging article, Williams discusses *Eyes of the Night* in detail and reveals the tightness of its symmetrical structure. The element of free indirect discourse in Wang's work has also been noted in the article.

Another major article concerning Wang Meng's innovative stories is written by William Tay, who tries to come to grips with the meaning of the concept of 'stream-of-consciousness,' particularly in Wang Meng's early post-1977 work, and in critical articles by Chinese commentators on it.⁶⁷ He compares the Chinese understanding of stream-of-consciousness with the Western use of it. Tay concludes that the element of free association is absent in the Chinese presentation of consciousness, and that this constitutes the essential difference between Chinese and Western concepts of stream-of-consciousness.

He points out that Taiwan literature does show this phenomenon in the original, Western sense.⁶⁸ Tay ranks the two stories which have been discussed above, *Eyes of the Night* and *Dream of the Sea*, among those in which FID is most extensively used.

A third Western scholar, Leo Ou-fan Lee, discusses Wang Meng in an article on the renewed attention to technique in China's new literature. He comments on Wang's fictional language, his emotionalism and subjectivism. He notes a "tendency towards verbal excess" in *Dream of the Sea*, which has the effect of softening the sharp edges of unpleasant realities. He concludes that this leads to a lack of depth of feeling and thought.⁶⁹ Lee also comments on the Chinese use of the concept of stream-of-consciousness when he cites *Eyes of the Night* as an illustration of Wang's "intense subjectivity that borders on the 'stream-of-consciousness'."⁷⁰ The reason why the term stream-of-consciousness is not applicable to Wang's work, in Lee's view, is the rational control of the protagonists' thinking by the narrator in Wang Meng's fiction. Wang is said, in Lee's words, "to 'interfere' with the mental processes of his fictional characters."⁷¹

Stream-of-consciousness, however, as a technique used by Wang Meng as his literary experiment in the late 1970s, offered a new angle and perspective into contemporary Chinese society. Unlike the traditional narrative which presented the story to the reader in a more or less linear chronological and spatial order, *Eyes of the Night* and *Dream of the Sea* written in 'stream-of-consciousness' invoked the reader's intellect and imagination so that the reader could make meaning out of the story himself. In this way, it engaged the reader in a process that was to encourage his or her own understanding and interpretation of the text, thus to inspire reader's individuality and creativity. It would be appropriate to end this chapter with Wang

Meng's own words: ". . . The methods and techniques of creation must be subordinated to content. If we engage in formalism we can only attain a superficial mastery, like some of those "slow chase" scenes (slow motion scenes of boys and girls chasing each other) in recent films that have already evoked derisive laughter from audiences. In order to assimilate and draw on the experience of something, we must digest it, use it for our own purposes, reform it, develop it, and create it anew. This is all the more true because we are well aware that the "stream-of-consciousness" technique abroad has long since reached the height of its popularity and has declined. Why should we go so far as to "use the foreigner's foot-binding cloth for a necktie"?⁷²

Notes

- ¹ Elly Hagenaar “*Stream of Consciousness and Free Indirect Discourse in Modern Chinese Literature*”, Centre of Non-Western Studies, Leiden University, 1992. p.5
- ² Ibid.,p.4 -5
- ³ The New Britannica Encyclopaedia, 15th edition, Vol. 28, 1992
- ⁴ The Columbia Encyclopaedia, 6th edition, Columbia University Press, 2000, p.2730

Cambridge Encyclopaedia, the second edition, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 1060
- ⁵ William Tay, “*Stream-of-Consciousness and the Controversy over Modernism*”, in *Modern Chinese Literature*, Spring 1984, San Francisco State University, 1984, p. 7
- ⁶ In local dialect Chinese these two differences may still be maintained normally. But in classical Chinese they are perhaps more difficult to uphold.
- ⁷ Ann Banfield, “*Narrative Style and the Grammar of Direct and Indirect Speech*,” *Foundations of Language*, 10, 1973, PP.1-39
- ⁸ Roy Pascal, “*The Dual Voice: Free Indirect Speech and Its Patterning in the Nineteenth Century*” Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977
- ⁹ Seymour Chatman, “ *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* ” Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1978, p. 201
- ¹⁰ C.H. Holman, “*Handbook to Literature*”, 4th edition, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1980, pp.429-430. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg have also observed that interior monologue “is often applied indiscriminately to modern fiction and sometimes used interchangeably with ‘stream of consciousness.’” See their “*The Nature of Narrative*” , New York: Oxford University Press, 1966 p.177
- ¹¹ Scholes and Kellogg. p.177
- ¹² Chatman, pp.182-183. Since “the grammatical meaning of subject-predicate in a Chinese sentence is not that of actor-action, as in most Indo-European languages, but topic-comment, which includes actor-action as a special case” (ZHAO, Yuen ren, “*Notes on Chinese Grammar and Logic*,” *Philosophy East and West*,1 (1955), 38), it is possible for a Chinese sentence to make perfect sense without the specification of the agent of the action. This is especially true in classical Chinese, and this is why the translator of Chinese poetry is often burdened with the strenuous task of identifying the protagonist

or speaker. But this does not mean that condition (1) as outlined by Chatman is not applicable to modern Chinese vernacular narrative, for evidently, even if the agent is not specified, the context normally can provide a correct identification. Again, Chatman's condition (2) may pose a small problem for classical Chinese, but is valid for vernacular Chinese.

- ¹³ Ibid., p.188
- ¹⁴ Scholes and Kellogg, p. 177
- ¹⁵ *Ulysses* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968), p. 152
- ¹⁶ Cf. Willi Buhler's discussion of Emma in "*Die 'erlebte Rede'*" im englischen Roman, Ihre Vorstufen und ihre Ausbildung im Werke Jane Austen, Zurich and Leipzig: M. Niehans, 1937
- ¹⁷ In other words, the function of the hermeneutic code as Roland Barthes has defined it in *S/Z*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1974, is not well served by the randomness of free association.
- ¹⁸ For a comprehensive study of the scholarship on this kind of form, see Brian McHale, "*Free Indirect Discourse: A Survey of Recent Accounts*," *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature*, 3 1978, pp.249-287
- ¹⁹ Dorrit Cohn, "*Narrated Monologue: Definition of a Fictional Style*," *Comparative Literature*, 18 1966, 98 Cf. Franz Stanzel, "*Narrative Situations in the Novel*", tr. James Puskas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971, p. 152
- ²⁰ Ann Banfield, "*Where Epistemology, Style and Grammar Meet Literary History*," *New Literary History*, 9 (1978), 424-443. V.N. Voloshinov maintains that in German the form, which he calls "quasi-direct discourse," is a relatively late development--Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901) marks its first deployment as a full fledged device. See his *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* tr. L. Matejka and I.R. Titunik (New York: Seminar, 1973), p.152. In French, Stephen Ullmann argues, Flaubert exploits freely the possibilities of the form. See his "*Reported Speech and Internal Monologue in Flaubert*," in *Style in the French Novel* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1957, pp. 94-120
- ²¹ Robert Humphrey, "*Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*", Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965, p.23
- ²² Ronald Carter, ed., "*Language and Literature*" London: Allen and Unwin, 1982, p. 240. See also Carter's analysis of free indirect speech in Hemingway's "*Cat in the Rain*" pp.72-73
- ²³ The early critical confusion in employing "stream-of-consciousness" as a technical term has been discussed by Lawrence Edward Bowling in "*What is the Stream of Consciousness Technique?*" *PMLA*, 65, 1950, pp. 333-345. In this early study, Bowling has already tried to

distinguish interior monologue from what he calls “internal analysis.” For a brief review of a recent discussion on the relationship between free indirect form and stream-of-consciousness, see Brian McHale, pp. 276-278.

- ²⁴ This volume was published by Huacheng Publishing House, Guangzhou: 1981
- ²⁵ Tay, p. 10
- ²⁶ Originally, “*The Eyes of the Night*” was published in Guangming ribao (21 October 1979)
- ²⁷ *Wang Meng’s Collection*, Vol. 4, p. 236
- ²⁸ Tay, p. 12
- ²⁹ *Wang Meng’s Collection*, Vol. 4, p. 235
- ³⁰ Ibid., p.240
- ³¹ The theme of travel has been linked with stream of consciousness. It has been described by Doris Stephan as the external accompanying feature of inner events.
- ³² The frequent occurrence of such shifts in Wang Meng’s fiction has been noted by William Tay. He illustrates this point with passages from Wang Meng’s other two stories: *Bolshevik Salute* and *Butterfly*. It may be considered striking that only one such shift occurs in *Eyes of the Night*. Refer to Tay pp.11-12
- ³³ *Wang Meng’s Collection*, Vol. 4, p. 240
- ³⁴ Ibid., p.238
- ³⁵ Ibid., p.238
- ³⁶ Ibid., p.235
- ³⁷ Ibid., p.236
- ³⁸ Ibid., p.236
- ³⁹ Ibid., p.238
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p.239
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p.240
- ⁴² Ibid., p.241
- ⁴³ Tay, p.17
- ⁴⁴ *Wang Meng’s Collection*, Vol. 4, p. 236

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- 45 Ibid., p.243
- 46 Ibid., p.239
- 47 Ibid., p.240
- 48 Ibid., p.236
- 49 Ibid., p.241
- 50 Ibid., p.242
- 51 Tay, p.12
- 52 *Wang Meng's Collection*, Vol. 4, p. 307
- 53 Ibid., p.302
- 54 Ibid., p.300
- 55 Ibid., pp.300-301
- 56 Ibid., p.306
- 57 Ibid., p.307
- 58 Ibid., p.307
- 59 Ibid., p.301
- 60 Ibid., p.303
- 61 Ibid., p.310
- 62 Williams has pointed out the general tendency of Wang Meng's early post-1977 stories to have positive endings. Philip Williams, "*Hudie : A Realistic Novelette with an Idealized Final*", Journal of Asia Culture 6, 1982, pp.21-23
- 63 *Wang Meng's Collection*, p.311
- 64 Philip Williams, 'Stylistic Variety in a PCR Writer: Wang Meng's Fiction of the 1979-1980' Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs 11 (1984): pp. 67-72
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 In his article, Tay also discusses Humphrey's terminology and classification, but expressly remarks on their looseness and imprecision.
- 68 Tay, pp. 14-15

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- ⁶⁹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, '*The Politics of Technique: Perspectives of Literary Dissidence in Contemporary Chinese Fiction*,' p. 171
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., p.165
- ⁷¹ Ibid., 168
- ⁷² Wang Meng, "*An Open Letter on 'Stream-of-Consciousness'*", in Wang Meng Collection Vol. 7, pp.74-75
王蒙在信中的结束语是：“吸收和借鉴必须消化，必须为我所用，必须有所改革，发展，创造。何况，我们也很清醒，‘意识流’手法在国外都已经盛极而衰了，我们何至於‘把洋人的裹脚布当领带’用呢？”

Chapter Five

Self-Representation and Structure of the Individual, Language and Negativity

Wang Meng and His Bolshevik Salute

王蒙是“现代派”的风筝。王蒙是停留在50年代的古典。王蒙是始终坚持现实主义。是永远的少共布尔什维克。

—— 王 蒙

Wang Meng is a kite of “modernism”. Wang Meng retains his classical style of the 1950s. Wang Meng always adheres to realism and he remains forever a young Bolshevik.

—— Wang Meng

Wang Meng's novella *Bolshevik Salute*,¹ which is widely regarded as a Chinese modernist novel, tells the story of Zhong Yicheng, a young man committed to the Chinese Communist Party, and Lin Xue, the comrade whom he loves and eventually marries. Zhong Yicheng is attacked when a children's poem he has written, “*Little Winter Wheat Tells Its Tale*,” (冬小麦自述) is found, to his bewilderment, to be a subversive political statement. Branded as a rightist, he loses his party membership and is exiled to carry out manual labour in the country. Twenty-six scenes covering the years from Zhong Yicheng's teenage enthusiasm for joining the Chinese Communist Revolution in the 1940s to his readmission to the Party

in 1979 explore the mind of a man trapped between his own self-knowledge and love of the Communist Party and the definition of himself the Party requires him to accept. As he struggles to define reality and justify his existence, Zhong's perspective ranges from idealistic zeal to cynical despair. This brilliant exploration of the psychology of political identity and alienation presents an inside view of the anguish experienced by individuals in modern China trying to remain faithful to both themselves and their country.

When *Bolshevik Salute* was first published in China in 1979, it became a focal point of the debate on the literary forms that had begun to be used after the end of the Cultural Revolution. Chinese writers who used such techniques as stream-of-consciousness narrative, reverse chronology, and psychological exploration were attacked on both cultural and political grounds. "They were accused of elitism in writing only for a highly educated intellectual minority, and of decadence in using Western literary techniques developed during periods of imperialism and capitalist expansion."² Defending their work, these writers maintained that the destruction of ideological unity and the resulting psychological uncertainty caused by the Cultural Revolution could not be adequately expressed using the socially engaged, mass-oriented realism favoured by the Chinese Communist Party government..

Like the hero of *Bolshevik Salute*, Wang Meng joined the Communist Party as a teenager, and was denounced in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 because of a short story he had written which criticized Party cadres. Wang Meng was also assigned to manual work in the countryside and was briefly reprieved before being sent for sixteen years to remote Xinjiang Province. In 1979 he was allowed to return to Beijing, where he worked as a professional

writer in the Chinese Writers' Association and began to publish stories and novellas.

This chapter makes a close reading of Wang Meng's *Bolshevik Salute*, which revolves around a common basic plot—the quest for the self as an individual entity with a degree of coherence and intelligibility. The primary interest of this chapter is to see how the individual self is portrayed, fashioned, and literally and verbally constructed, in the narrative text.

Self-Representation or Negative Self-Definition

When Wang Meng's *Bolshevik Salute* appeared in 1979, Chinese literature had for some forty years largely given up on the subject of self-representation in writing. According to revolutionary ideology, the individual should subordinate the self to the collective goals of the masses. Mao Zedong's "*Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*" of 1942 represents the Communist Party's efforts toward establishing a new authoritative textual tradition on the foundation of revolutionary ideology. Prescriptive and peremptory in tone, the purpose of the "Talks" was both to replace the discredited classical tradition of the past and to put an end to the floundering "May Fourth" literature that followed. Under Party guidance, when it came to expressions of the self, the conscientious Maoist writer had, as Robert Hegel puts it, two choices: "either to present himself as an exemplary character in his writing (one that is 'close to the ideal') or to erase any trace of individuality from his writings, replacing his particular consciousness with the desired ideology of the community."³

The negation of the self was a process that had already begun in China in the early 1930s with the increasing leftward turn of literature. Under the pressures of revolution and war, whatever crises intellectuals confronted as individuals or writers could not be taken with the same degree of seriousness; if they appeared as the subjects of fiction, it was often as targets of satire or criticism. Yet even decades later, when such themes as self-awareness and introspection became no longer “forbidden zones” (禁区) under the relative liberalization of the post-Mao era, it is evident that the experiences about the individual self cannot really be explored without considering them in relation to the collective history, the succession of political events and campaigns, of the past forty or fifty years.⁴ As Yi-Tsi Mei Feuerwerker points out in the essay *Text, Intertext, and the Representation of Writing Self in Lu Xun, Yu Dafu, and Wang Meng*:⁵ “While inspired by Western literary models . . . In modern Chinese fictional works focusing on the search for a self apparently caught in a crisis brought on by cultural or political dislocations, multiple texts, as pieces or ‘tags’ from multiple cultural systems, literary conventions, or ideological formulas, will interact or collide in complex ways within the story to complicate that search.”⁶

Bolshevik Salute begins by recounting what would seem like a minimal gesture toward textual self-representation. Minimal as it is, the time is 1957, and it turns out to be enough to hang the label of “rightist” on its author, Zhong Yicheng. In May of that year his piece “*Little Winter Wheat Tells Its Own Tale*” (冬小麦自述), “a small poem written for a very small children’s book,”⁷ is published. The poem reads thus:

*When wild chrysanthemums wither,
We start to come up;*

*While ice and snow cover the ground,
We are pregnant with a rich harvest.* ⁸

野菊花谢了，
我们生长起来；
冰雪覆盖着大地，
我们孕育着丰收。

As the story explains:

*Poor Zhong Yicheng had fallen in love with poetry. . .
He had read and memorized so much poetry, and tears
flowing, staying up all night, weeping, laughing, chanting,
shouting, murmuring, he had written so many poems, and for
this “Little Winter Wheat Tells Its Own Tale” he had written
so many, many lines.* ⁹

可怜的钟亦成，他爱上了诗。 . . . 他读了，背诵
了那么多诗，他流着泪，熬着夜，哭着，笑着，叨念着，
喊叫着，低语着写了那么多，那么多诗，就是那首[冬小麦
自述]也写了那么多，那么多行。

But due to the cutting of some “learned, prestigious, very near-sighted editor,” only these four lines appeared, printed in “the lower-right-hand corner to go with a country scene.” This was the only poetry Zhong Yicheng had ever published. “Still it was glorious, it was happiness,” “the four lines contained so much of his love, his dreams.”

10

“Poor Zhong Yicheng” has been seduced by the wonders of literature and language; it proves to be his undoing. The power of language, as the story will show, is treacherously double-edged. In the article “*What His Own Tale Is Telling*” (他在自述些什么), a “rising new star in literary criticism” offers an analysis of the little poem “from the point of view of the total situation of political struggle.”¹¹ According to this, a literary critic cites the poem as calling for the end of the Communist Party (the withering chrysanthemums); for the seizure of power by the capitalist cliques of rightists, Chiang Kai-shek, Song Meiling, and so on; it expresses the feeling of extreme gloom, hostility, and fear on the part of the dying reactionary classes against the powerful dictatorship of the proletariat (“ice and snow cover the ground” 冰雪覆盖着大地); and it actually is calling for open counterrevolutionary rebellion (“we are pregnant with a rich harvest” 我们孕育着丰收).¹² An apparently simple, straightforward text can thus be interpreted to mean anything at all; a piece of literary composition, whatever its own intention or merits, merely provides an occasion for the all-determining work of the critic.

The effect of this political explication of the children’s poem “explodes like a bomb”; it immediately changes everything in Zhong Yicheng’s life. A young cadre at the Party Central District Committee, Zhong has himself been enthusiastically participating in the anti-rightist struggle as leader of the Investigative Study Team of his office. But now the attitude of the majority of people toward him is no longer the same. He wants to protest, but “the new star had already clutched at his throat.” In his helpless, humiliated state he cries out to the inaccessible critic: “Why didn’t you at least ask me what kind of person I was? How can you say I am like this without trying to understand my political history and actual performance?”¹³

Compared with other characters in some other modern Chinese novels, Zhong Yicheng can only be described as an aspiring but utterly thwarted writer. The effect of his puny literary output, however, is enormous, and fatal. His “small poem” with its theme turns out ironically to be indeed the text that is seized upon to define him. Writing and, even more, the interpretation of writing are presented in “Bolshevik Salute” as activities that can determine one’s life. The fact that Zhong Yicheng’s sole published work occupied only “the lower right-hand corner” of an illustration in a children’s book may be a comment on the circumscribed space allowed for writing at that time. But in any case the writing self as constructed from the text is no longer a matter for its producer but one for its critics. Once Zhong Yicheng’s writing permits him to be interpellated by the ideologized discourse, does it matter who he is as a concrete individual?

While the stability of self-identity through times of political turmoil is a major theme in other examples of Wang Meng stories such as “*Butterfly*” (蝴蝶) and “*Piebald*” (杂色), “*Bolshevik Salute*” explores the issue specifically through the highly problematic relationship between individual identity on the one hand and the use and understanding of text on the other.

When the novella appeared, its jumbling of chronological sequence and emphasis on psychological depiction were recognized as introducing a new kind of formal experimentation into Chinese fiction: “Wang Meng became a focal point of controversy over what was considered his “modernist” “stream-of-consciousness” technique.”¹⁴ Literary methods, surely in China, as well as in some other countries, inevitably have political implications, and the problem was how to reconcile his apparent imitation of such “decadent bourgeois methods” with the usual requirement that literature be realistic and didactic. But

“stream-of-consciousness,” insofar as it is a narrative technique that undertakes to portray the free flow of the character’s mental processes in a seemingly free-associating, illogical, and random manner, is hardly the characteristic mode of “*Bolshevik Salute*.” In fact the order of events--both internal and external-- is artfully arranged and contrived, and very effectively brings into dramatic interplay the issues of language and self through time and history.

The novella is divided into twenty-six parts, their length ranging from one sentence to twelve pages, each headed by a time indicator, such as August 1957; February 1950; 1957-1979; November 23, 1959; or “year and date unclear.” The earliest date is January 1949, the eve of liberation for the city of P-, the latest, January 1979, when the day of rehabilitation for Zhong Yicheng finally arrives. Rather than employing free association where the character might seem to respond to things as they come up, “*Bolshevik Salute*” can be described as using a technique analogous to the montage in film: it consists of a series of juxtaposed memories “dissolving” in and out of past and present, while the protagonist tries to make sense of his life as it is impinged upon by the events of revolutionary history.¹⁵

On one unusually hot day, Lao Wei, the District Committee Secretary, and Song Ming, the Office Chairman and thus Zhong Yicheng’s immediate superior, who have both been reprimanded from above for their unsatisfactory performance in the anti-rightist campaign; call him in for a “talk.” “Suddenly the temperature dropped to below absolute zero,” for now he is a “rightist”; “a new phase of life began, and any continuity there had ever been, was shattered.”¹⁶

A narrative structure fragmented into segments of time provides a formal mirroring of the protagonist’s frustrated attempts to

see his life together as a whole. To bring past and present together, instead of establishing connections, merely underscores the violent disjunctions between them. One such moment occurs in June 1966, when Zhong Yicheng is savagely beaten with leather belts and metal chains by Red Guards, while they collectively recite from the “Quotations of Chairman Mao,” the authoritative inter-text that puts everyone under its absolute power. Zhong Yicheng passes out. In the instant before losing consciousness, he “saw what was forever fresh, forever alive, forever sacred and not far away at all”¹⁷. “Dissolve” to January 1949, when the seventeen-year-old Zhong Yicheng, a high school student who had been doing underground work for the Party, carries out instructions to prepare for the liberation of P----- . As he leads his group of fellow students triumphantly through the city, he is greeted by Ling Xue (later his wife) with *Bu Li* “Bolshevik Salute,” an abbreviated phrase much used in Party documents in the 1940s, which he is hearing for first time in his life.

*“It was like a raging fire, a violent whirlwind, a greeting that was sacred, that filled one with joy! Bolshevik Salute! Bolshevik Salute!”*¹⁸

这真是烈火逛飙一样的名词，神圣而又令人满怀喜悦的问候。布礼！布礼！

“Dissolve” back to June 1966, and Zhong Yicheng’s coming-to after his beating by the red Guards. He notes that these young people with red armbands are about seventeen, “. . . like me in 1949! Seventeen, really an age for revolution! An age to wear armbands! . . . An age so fervid, so pure, so lovable!” As they beat him into unconsciousness again, he suddenly shouts “‘Bolshevik Salute!’ while the bloody corners of his mouth carry a suggestion of the smile in his

heart.” But the Red Guards do not understand him; they think he is quoting some Japanese phrases, a contact code perhaps; could he be a Japanese spy? In any case it looks like he is dead now, but that is all right, since, to quote an authorizing inter-text, “there is no crime in revolution”¹⁹. Past and present may be juxtaposed, but there is no continuity between them, there is only the shocking contrast between idealism and terror; the recall of the revolutionary language from those early days merely shows how utterly the original phrase of that language has lost its meaning.

During those heady days in the 1940s, to Zhong Yicheng and his comrades, joining the revolution meant reading new texts and learning a new language. They were young then, many of them children, but they had read left-wing publications, Xinhua dispatches, works by Mao, and so on, and they were ready to sacrifice themselves to create a new world, a world to fit the new rhetoric. Zhong Yicheng had been only fifteen when he joined the Chinese Communist Party. Three days after the struggle to liberate P---- is won, Zhong Yicheng receives a notice to go to a citywide meeting of Party members, the first one he has ever attended. He exchanges Bolshevik Salutes; eyes filled with hot tears, he hears “The Internationale” for the first time; he listens to the leaders as they report one after the other. Each speech is “clear, forthright, well reasoned, fully confident. . .

*The voice of the Party. Like a sponge Zhong Yicheng absorbed the wisdom and strength of the Party. He prostrated himself with enthusiasm and delight before this totally new content, this new faith, this utterly new language and totally new way of speaking. With each sentence he felt he had learned something new, had grown bigger, taller, and a bit more mature.*²⁰

党的声音。钟亦成像海绵吸水一样地吸取着党的智慧和力量，为这全新的内容，全新的信念，全新的语言和全新的讲述方式而五体投地，欢欣鼓舞，每听一句话，他好像就学到了一点新东西，就更长大了，长高了，成熟了一分。

Through the new language, the Party teaches him a new conception of himself. At eighteen as a regular member he attends a Party lesson (党课) given by Lao Wei, the District Committee secretary. He hears that “to be truly Bolshevik, to assume the Party spirit completely and purely one must forget the self and throw oneself into the revolutionary struggle.” One must “change one’s thinking, overcome individualism, the wish to become an individual hero, liberalism, subjectivism”²¹. “How True! How True!” Zhong Yicheng almost cries out as he eagerly soaks up the words.

Seventeen years later, in March 1967, the detailed notes taken on this occasion in the notebook he “had always treasured” are confiscated from his house during a bloody search and used in a struggle against Lao Wei, now himself a target as a “capitalist roader.” The once-inspiring Party lesson has become “negative teaching material” (反面教材), which, “spewing out poison . . . waved the banner for Liu Shaoqi’s black theories of cultivation, etc.”²² At any given moment some unpredictable force—a political campaign, mass hysteria—can take over, and the meaning of the language in a text will change—even into its opposite. What does this mean for the self, moulded by Party discourse?

That evening Comrade Song Ming, the office Chairman, kills himself. His suicide signals the failure of one who had dedicated himself to the meticulous and conscientious work of studying Party

texts and then evaluating individuals by the texts they themselves produced. “Although Song Ming had instigated the anti-rightist campaign against him, Zhong Yicheng firmly believed Song Ming was not a bad person. Every day Song Ming read the books of Marx, Lenin, Chairman Mao, Central Committee documents, Party reports, Party publications, deep into the night. He was fond of using methods of inference and deduction to analyze each person’s thinking; each sesame seed was analyzed into a watermelon . . . In 1957, with gusto he had logically, methodically, and with amazing ingenuity analyzed every single sentence Zhong Yicheng had said, every single line of poetry he had tried to write, and proved that Zhong Yicheng was a capitalist rightist from head to toe.”²³

. . . 他坚信宋明不是坏人。宋明每天读马列的书，毛主席的书，读中央文件和党报党刊直到深夜，他热衷于用推理，演绎的方法分析美个人的思想，把每粒芝麻分析成西瓜，. . . 。一九五七年，他津津乐道地，言之成理地，一套一套地，高妙惊人地分析钟亦成所说的每一句话或者试写过的每一句诗，证明了钟亦成是彻头彻尾的资产阶级右派。

Devoted explicator as Song Ming is, his life, hitherto totally guided by “textual criticism,” reaches an impasse when the interpretation of the texts is suddenly, inexplicably altered.

“*Bolshevik Salute*” is a story about Zhong Yicheng and individuals like him, and about a party, a revolutionary history, that is deeply entrapped in a world made up of language. Of course, all human societies tend to be, after all, dominated by language. In analysing the referents through which the author characterizes Zhong Yicheng, we can find that Wang Meng describes the negative aspects

of Zhong's life experiences (from 1957 to his post-Cultural Revolution rehabilitation) as formed by language-related activities. As a matter of fact, the natural use of the language had vanished during the political movements in China in the 1950s and the 1960s, especially by the shifting interpretation of the language and how it is used and abused during that particular period. In her perceptive discussion of the novella, Wendy Larson points out that "throughout *Bolshevik Salute* Wang Meng maintains a strong skepticism toward language as an indicator of 'true' reality,"²⁴ Perhaps one could go further to say that the story also suggests that language has replaced the "true reality" it might have been claiming to "indicate" or "represent."

As the story shows, the referents of language, what the various texts, interpreted and reinterpreted, are supposed to "be about," turn out to be irrelevant. More than any other self in our stories, Zhong Yicheng is to be constructed out of texts and inter-textual quotations. In fact it hardly matters who the individual Zhong Yicheng—at different times defined as a "positive, zealous Party member," a "capitalist rightist," an "enemy of the Party," or a "counterrevolutionary revisionist"—might actually be. In 1959, a rightist, still endlessly producing pieces of "self-criticism" (检讨) to sort himself out, risks his life and is severely burned one night when he puts out a fire in a storehouse. But because of his current status (身份), the authorities, instead of applauding his bravery, suspect him of arson or sabotage. His deeds cannot speak louder than words—the words of others that are applied to him.

Since Zhong Yicheng is constantly exhorted to "remold and reform himself" (改造自己), to "change his soul to another" (换一个灵魂), to "cast off his old self and be reborn" (脱胎换骨), he

cannot maintain himself as a continuing individual identity. When Lin Xue, his wife to be, expresses her support of him in spite of the criticism of his “Little Winter Wheat Tells Its Own Tale,” she asks: “Don’t you yourself know what you are?” It is a question he truly cannot answer.

The self is defined and shaped by the Party through tags, labels, slogans, formulas, reports, documents, and by the dozens of constantly revised “self-criticisms” that one writes. As Zhong Yicheng acknowledges with gratitude, he would be nothing without the Party, since literally the Party defines him to himself but at the same time, one could also say that the Party, through constant textual redefinitions and reconstructions, has made him into nothing. This is the language trap as revealed in “*Bolshevik Salute*”: language whose reference to external “reality” is indeterminable, and that turns out to be a continually destabilizing, self-contradictory system.²⁵

The self and its memories, the party and its history, as Wang Meng strongly implies, do indeed exist—“real” people have lived and loved and fought and suffered—but they are not accessible through the language of the texts. The texts have taken over reality, but then keep referring in circular fashion throughout the story only to themselves, or rather to reinterpreted versions of themselves. While exposing this language trap, “*Bolshevik Salute*” is itself an enactment of the entrapment because it must remain within the language system on which it is premised.

In the last section, January 1979, the day of Zhong Yicheng’s rehabilitation finally arrives. Husband and wife receive a text, the “written conclusion” (书面结论) that exonerates and rehabilitates

them and restores their Party membership. They jointly say in their hearts:

*Such a good country, such a good Party! . . . Although the term “Bolshevik Salute” has gradually disappeared from our letters and speech, although people generally do not use or have forgotten this term with its foreign language component, allow us to use it one more time: Bolshevik Salute to the comrades of the Central Committee!*²⁶

多么好的国家，多么好的党！ . . . 尽管‘布礼’这个名词已经逐渐从我们的书信和口头消失，尽管人们一般已经不用。已经忘记了这个包含着一个外来语的词汇，但是，请允许我们再用一次这个词吧：向党中央的同志致以布礼！

The circularity of the language system is hereby reaffirmed. Once again at the end, it seems difficult to reach beyond repeating what has already been repeated and yet revealed to be so problematic in the past, even when looking toward a brighter tomorrow.

Structural Entrapment of the Individual

Wendy Larson has made the comment: “While maintaining the moralistic stance of both traditional Chinese literature and socialist realism under Mao, Wang Meng’s *Bolshevik Salute* utilizes modernist technique and structure to undermine the positivistic and didactic effects of the realist message.”²⁷ Besides using the modernist techniques of stream-of-consciousness, internal monologue, unfinished

sentences, jarring switches in scene, and emphasis on the psychology of the characters, the author also creates a modernist structural and thematic environment in his portrayal of “reality” as perceived by the individual intellectual, and as circumscribed for the intellectual by the state. There are three defining elements of this constructed “reality”, which alienate the protagonist from his own personal identity as an intellectual. These are:

1. Reality as a structural trap from which the individual has no hope of escape;
2. Reality as wordplay or as encompassed by a language that does not correspond to “truth”;
3. The setting off of this negatively defined “language reality” against the positive but unavailable alternatives of physical labour or participation in the revolution.

Through this modernist structure, Wang Meng challenges the contemporary ideology which states that an “intellectual” can also be “revolutionary”, Wang Meng claims that the term “revolutionary” and “intellectual,” as defined in China from 1949 to 1979, are incompatible and contradictory.

In *Bolshevik Salute*, the experience of the protagonist, Zhong Yicheng, is detailed to the reader through a non-chronological series of twenty-six episodes, some of them lasting several pages, with the shortest only one sentence long. These twenty-six segments, which delineate Zhong Yicheng’s experience and perception, embody a dual structure that is a clear polarization of mental and physical events within the protagonist’s life. The complete story maintains tight structural consistency, and the individual is portrayed as trapped in a mythically powerful—that is, inaccessible to perception

or comprehension—dualistic structure from which he or she cannot escape.

The twenty-six segments of the novella can be characterized as positive (P) or negative (N) in a chart (as Wendy Larson did in her book **Bolshevic Salute: A Modernist Chinese Novel**, University of Washington Press, 1989), which illustrates the structural coherency the author has established.²⁸

1. Chaos and disorder	<i>August 1957</i>	N
2. CR, beating	<i>June 1966</i>	N
3. Party: love	<i>January 1949</i>	P
4. CR, beating	<i>June 1966</i>	N
5. CR, interrogation	<i>March 1970</i>	N
6. Party work	<i>January 1949</i>	P
7. Strong and fortunate	<i>1957-79</i>	P
8. Wei and Party education	<i>February 1950</i>	P
9. Anti-Rightist campaign	<i>November 1957</i>	N
10. CR, Song's suicide	<i>March 1967</i>	N
11. The Gray shadow	<i>1979</i>	N
12. Party belief	<i>March 1958</i>	P+P
13. Generation of light	<i>1951-58</i>	P+P
14. Marriage, songs, wine	<i>April 1958</i>	P
15. To an open country	<i>November 1958</i>	P
16. The Gray shadow	<i>1979</i>	N
17. CR, why?	<i>1970</i>	N+N
18. Bolshevic salute	<i>Year unclear</i>	N+N
19. Diary; appeal	<i>September 1978</i>	P
20. Country—romantic	<i>November 1958-59</i>	P

21. Labour: Fire	<i>November 1959</i>	P
22. Interrogation	<i>Second Day</i>	N
23. The Gray shadow	<i>1979</i>	N
24. CR, Wei's death	<i>August 1975</i>	N
25. Ling Xue after fire	<i>November 1959</i>	P
26. Retribution	<i>January 1979</i>	P

This chart shows an equal number of positive and negative episodes, with two extremely positive and two extremely negative events. The extremes are divided between the logical and the emotional aspects as explained below:

The high point of the positive-logical occurs in episode 12, when Zhong Yicheng's girl friend and eventual wife, Ling Xue, lectures Zhong on a correct understanding of what has happened to him. The section begins with Zhong's declaration of faith in the Party:

But I believe in the Party! Our great, glorious, true Party! The Party has wiped dry so many tears and opened up such a future! Without the Party, I would be only a struggling insect on the verge of death.²⁹

但是，我相信党！我们的伟大的，光荣的，正确的党！党，擦干了多少人的眼泪，开辟了怎样的前程！没有党，我不过是一个在死亡线上挣扎的可怜虫。

The outcome of this long declaration is Zhong's decision that the Party could not be wrong and he must indeed be a rightist. He decides to tell Ling Xue that they must separate, and arranges a

meeting with her to convince her of his crimes. Zhong Yicheng brings up several examples of his individualism, sentimentalism, and desire for glory, and finally breaks into tears. Ling's response to this emotional outpouring is a declaration of Zhong's innocence that is based on logical denial:

No, no, don't talk like that, don't talk like that! . . . Don't exaggerate, don't be swayed by your emotions, don't make things bigger than they are, and don't believe everything you hear. The criticism of "Little Winter Wheat Tells Its Tale" was absurd! They're wrong to label you a rightist, they're mistaken. . . Forgive me Zhong, in the past you didn't like to hear this, but it's true; you're too young, just too young. I mean you're too little, you're too innocent and enthusiastic, you love dreams too much and you love analysis too much. . . Let's go together to try and understand those things we don't understand. . . Maybe it's all just a misunderstanding, a temporary fury.³⁰

不，不，你不要这样说，你不要这样说！．．．你不要夸张，不要感情用事，不要言过其词，不要听见什么就是什么。对〔冬小麦自述〕批判，胡批！把你定成右派．．．小钟，原谅我，过去，你就不爱听这话，然而，这是真的，你太年轻，太年轻，我要说是太小了啊，你太单纯也太热情，太爱幻想也太爱分析．．．让我们一起去弄懂那些还没有弄懂的东西吧．．．也许，这只是一场误会，一场暂时的怒气。

Through Ling Xue's exposition, Zhong Yicheng is able to regain some faith in himself and in his life.

This positive-logical scene is followed by a positive emotional episode that is dated 1951-1958, the era of the protagonist's greatest faith in the Communist party and in the future of China. Using images of light and repeating the word "love" several times in this section, Wang Meng recreates the enthusiasm of complete immersion in emotional identification with the nation, the Party, and socialist goals:

We are a generation of light; we have a love full of light. No one can take away the light in our hearts; no one can take away the love in our hearts.

When we were young children, we struggled in the darkness. When we got a little older, we moved from darkness toward light. The night was too black, too dark, so we saw the morning as a flash of light, endless radiance. We shouted and leapt, running toward the light, embracing the light, not aware of the shadows there too. We thought the shadows had died with the black night; we thought the sun above our heads would forever be a morning sun.³¹

我们是光明的一代，我们有光明的爱情。谁也夺不走我们心中的光，谁也夺不走我们心中的爱。

当我们幼小的时候，我们在黑暗中挣扎，当我们从孩子变成青年的时候，我们从黑暗走向光明。夜是太黑了，太暗了，所以，早晨，我们看到的是一片光辉，是万丈光芒。我们欢呼跳跃着奔向光明，拥抱光明，我们不知道还有阴影的存在。我们以为阴影已经随着黑夜而消逝，我们以为头顶上永远是八九点钟的太阳。

The negative –logical point occurs in section 17, when Zhong Yicheng is questioned by an unknown voice that appears to be his own mind. The questions focus on the lack of logic inherent in his faith in and love for the Party:

What did you say? You fervently love the Party? If you fervently love the Party why did the Party cancel your Party membership ticket?

The logic of a genius! It presses on irresistible with the ease of a knife cutting through butter.³²

你说什么？你热爱党？你热爱党为什么注销了你的党票？注销了你的党票你还能热爱党吗？

多么天才的逻辑，真是高屋建瓴，势如破竹。

The negative –emotional point directly follows in section 18, with the date defined as “year unclear.” In this section the images of light and love from the positive-emotional scene above are replaced by blackness, wild whistling winds, lightning, and a burning heart.

These four focal points of positive-logical, positive-emotional, negative-logical, and negative-emotional are the representative segments of an entire structure that is organized around them. By characterizing each scene as positive or negative, Wang Meng portrays the individual as trapped in a pre-ordered structure that throws him or her back and forth between two extremes of perception. By highlighting certain episodes as defined by logical

aspects and others as defined by emotional aspects, in the story, Wang Meng “formulates two ways of approaching the world that are impossible for the individual to reconcile in personal identity.”³³ The sharp delineation between the positive and the negative in the different episodes establishes an absolutely dualistic structure, yet the even number of positive and negative scenes also implies a consistency; the individual’s position fluctuates between the two extremes, and here Wang Meng is unable to perceive the larger structure that entraps him. Thus Zhong Yicheng is beset by doubts, yet only at the point where the negative and the logical coincide at their most forceful is he able to perceive the historical and national significance of his position; still, even at this time of ultimate awareness, his vision is only partial and immediately counteracted by the negative-emotional scene which removes Zhong’s ability to understand his predicament as a historical condition and places him back in the confining structure of individual emotional perception.

A possible reconciliation of the logical and the emotional approaches occurs in the final scene of the novella, the day (这一天终于来了) in January 1979. The coldness with which the couple (Zhong Yicheng and his wife) receive their exoneration, along with their linking of the event to “seasonal change” and mathematical inevitability, implies that they have finally assumed a position of detachment that allows them to perceive both historical consistency and their own previous individual fallibility and entrapment:

The months and years were ruthless, and behind them there were trials more ruthless than they. Zhong Yicheng’s hair was white, and Ling Xue was no longer young. This couple received their exoneration and rehabilitation with total coldness,

*and in their eventual return to the ranks of the Party registry they were as unruffled as if they were observing the seasonal changes or the regularity of the sum of the inside angles of a triangle.*³⁴

尽管岁月是无情的，尽管在岁月后面还有比岁月更无情的试炼，尽管钟亦成已经花白了头发而凌雪也已经并不年轻，尽管他们夫妻十分冷静地接受了平反昭雪，恢复党籍的书面结论，就像接受四季的转换和三角形的三个内角的和值一样平静。

However, following the pattern of the entire novella, with its switching from logical to emotional, and from positive to negative scenes, Zhong Yicheng and Ling Xue quickly return to an emotional identification with their past suffering and their new future:

As if they had agreed to do so beforehand, they fixed their eyes on the rushing train. On the snow-covered ground the train looked like a fiery black dragon. Their hearts flew along with this train to Beijing. They stood for ages, watched for ages, but did not speak. But the words in their hearts were one and the same; they could hear the sound in their hearts. Crying hot tears, they said:

*“Such a good country, such a good Party!”*³⁵

他们不约而同地把目光集中到正在飞奔的火车上去了。在白雪覆盖的大地上，火车像一条热气腾腾的黑色的龙。他们的心正随着这火车向北京奔

去。他们站了老半天，看了老半天，没有话。但他们心里的语言是相通的和共同的，他们心里的声音是可以听得到的。他们流着热泪说：

“多么好的国家，多么好的党！”

As Wang Meng clarifies, however, the implication “of this emotional identification with a past of hardship and a future of glory is different from the entrapment of the past.”³⁶ The consistently dualistic structure of the last thirty years will now be replaced by one in which the individual will not, as in the past, function with a total lack of historical awareness, but will be an intelligent, independent, objective observer of the present and of historical “reality”:

*And our country, our people, our great, glorious, correct Party have had to hold many things back. They have gone through a lot, matured and become inestimably more intelligent. Only the bad have been frightened away by the thorns on the path of revolution. Only self-deceivers, deceivers of others, or those harbouring evil intentions have shut their eyes to these thorns or even not allowed others to see them. No power will prevent us from following the brilliantly lit and inextinguishable road of reality back to its true nature or letting the bright road of constant faith go forward.*³⁷

我们的国家，我们的人民，我们的伟大的，光荣的，正确的党也都深沉得多，老练得多，无可估量地成熟和聪明得多了。被革命的路上的荆棘吓

倒的是坏种，闭眼不看这荆棘，甚至不准别人看到这荆棘的则是自欺欺人或是别有居心。任何力量都不能妨碍我们沿着让不灭的事实恢复本来面目，让守恒的信念大发光辉的道路走向前去。

This portrayal, consistent with official policy in 1979 when *Bolshevik Salute* was published, presents the past as an aberration that political change has now rectified. This aspect of the novel was seized upon by critics who supported Wang Meng's modernist experiments; these critics claim the novel illustrates the unchanging loyalty toward the party and socialism that is characteristic of many of those who were persecuted in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.³⁸ At the same time, however, within this final episode the protagonist makes the same flip-flop switch between the negative and the positive, the logical and emotional that has delineated his entrapment throughout the novella, thus implying at another level that the dualistic structure is still in effect, and undermining the optimistic presentation of a new consciousness, understanding, and direction. Although the entire scene of ultimate retribution is positive, as required by the positivistic tenets of socialist realism, it contains enough negative elements to allow Wang Meng to throw doubt on his superficial construction of a glorious future.

The protagonist's denial of the continuing potency of a previously mythical (that is, incomprehensible and unperceived) structure allows the novella to assume a didactic function characteristic of Chinese socialist realism. Through denial, the individual can reassume a moral position in society that was removed when he or she played the role of a cog unaware of the direction or overall movement of the greater wheel of society. The individual's renewed moral status comes not from moral awakening,

however, but from the alteration of the direction of the “wheel,” as society now insists on the significance and importance of intelligent individual input.

Therefore, Wang Meng gives the reader two contrasting visions. On the surface, the post-Mao reorganization of political and social reality has allowed the individual to escape structural entrapment and assume a morally valuable position. Within this restructuring, however, Wang Meng implies that the ups and downs of the past may still exist, and that the individual will be caught in a new yet similarly predefined structure and will be thrown back into a powerless, illogical entrapment within his or her emotions.

Language and Negativity

In analysing the main character of Zhong Yicheng in *Bolshevik Salute*, we find that Wang Meng describes the negative aspects of Zhong Yicheng’s life experience as formed by language-related activities. Throughout the novella, Wang Meng tries to maintain a strong skepticism toward language as an indicator of “true” reality, presenting it rather as a self-contradiction that is both the most significant and powerful element of intellectual existence in post-Mao China, and at the same time misleading and in some cases debilitating in its ability to indicate reality.

In *Bolshevik Salute*, the ability of language to function as a tool that can logically represent reality is undermined by insistent emphasis on the preventing elements of language; reality is an area of experience that must, by definition, lie outside the bounds of

inherent relationship to any form of language representation. Consistent with this scepticism is the book's dualistic structure, which breaks up into the aligning parallels of the positive and the negative, and the logical and the emotional. Language meets its greatest failure to interpret or represent reality when the positive and the logical come together. However, in keeping with the portrayal of the socially moral stance of the enlightened individual in a socialist country, the hiatus between language and reality is presented as a temporary state that will be rectified when the political environment is altered.³⁹

A close examination of the nature of the intellectual individual's plight reveals that his or her downfall is a result of reliance on language as a means of interpreting and representing reality. Furthermore, both society and the individual stipulate that language is the social phenomenon most significant in the definition of intellectual identity. Zhong Yicheng's trouble begins with the publication of a poem he has written about wheat.

In Zhong Yicheng's eyes the poem is the linguistic representation of physical reality; it is accompanied by a picture of the wheat fields and chrysanthemums that strengthens this link. Wang Meng shows children as perceiving the unity between words and physical phenomena:

After reading his poem, a fat little boy dressed like a sailor asked his mother, "What is 'little wheat'? How much smaller is that than 'big wheat'?" "Sweetie, little doesn't really mean little, don't you see?" His curly-haired mother laughed, not knowing which words to choose. A girl with long braids read his four-line poem and wanted to go to the

*country to see the fields, the peasants and farmers, the cycle of the crops and the mill where wheat turned into snow-white flour. . . . What a marvellous thing!*⁴⁰

读了他的诗，一个穿着小海军服的胖小子问他的妈妈：“什么叫小麦？小麦比大麦小多少？”“我的孩子，小的不见得比大的小啊，你明白吗？”烫头发的，含笑妈妈说，她不知道该选择怎样的词句。还有一个梳着小辫子的小姑娘，读了他的四句诗，她就想到农村去，想看一看田野，庄稼，农民，代谢迭替着的作物，还有磨坊，小麦在那里变成了雪白的面粉 多么幸福，多么光荣！

It is only much later in the novella, when Zhong Yicheng is sent down to the countryside for labour, that readers discover that he has never been to the countryside before; his “knowledge” is not directly experienced, but indirectly gained, probably through some language source. He suspects that his impressions may have come from fiction:

*Clearly this was the first time he had come here in his life, not only to Goosewing Peak, but also the first time he had been to the mountains or the country. Why did this scene make him feel so unexpectedly close and familiar, as if they were kindred spirits? Could it be that he had seen a description like this in some novel?*⁴¹

明明他是生平第一遭到这儿来，不但是初次到雁翅峰来，而且是初次上山下乡来，为什么这风

光景物竟使他觉得这样亲切，熟悉，心心相印呢？
莫非他在哪一本小说中看到过这样的描写？

Although for young children the poem creates an immediate identification with the actual existence of wheat and flowers, the poem is not the result of Zhong Yicheng's immersion in and love of the countryside that produced the wheat and flower, but rather a poetic fiction, the result of his immersion in and love of poetry:

Poor Zhong Yicheng had come to love poetry. (Some people say poets never come to a good end. Byron, Shelley, Pushkin, Mayakovsky—if they were not killed in a fight, they committed suicide, or they were locked up for having illicit affairs.) He read so much poetry, and, tears flowing, chanted it aloud; he stayed up all night, crying, laughing, mumbling, and shouting. He wrote so many poems, going over and over them in a low voice. ⁴²

可怜的钟亦成，他爱上了诗。（有人说，写诗是不会有好下场的，不论拜伦还是雪莱，普希金还是马雅可夫斯基，不是决斗中被杀就是自杀，要不得也得因乱搞男女关系而坐牢。）

他读了，背诵了那么多诗，他流着泪，熬着夜，哭着，笑着，叨念着，喊叫着，低语着写了那么多，那么多诗。

In the Chinese society of the late 1950s, Zhong Yicheng's assumption that his poem is about wheat is equivalent to the naïveté

of a child; as he comes to learn in the subsequent handling of his poem, for an adult language has no absolute referent but can be made to refer to any phenomenon, concept, or ideology.

The forced interpretation of the poem as political allegory is Zhong's downfall. The educated Chinese reader would undoubtedly perceive the double traditional-contemporary implication of an obvious linking of literary language to political events. Not only was political allegory a common form of writing in pre-modern and modern China, but also, because of the examination system and literary education that supported it and prepared candidates for service as an official, mastery of the literary language and political power were closely intertwined. In the case of Zhong Yicheng, the interpretation of the poem seems to be ridiculously random; at the same time, the political nature of his opponents' analysis is only a common application of a traditional structural unity of politics and literature that is culturally designated and thus almost predetermined. Significantly, Wang Meng describes the nature of the analysis as something which "precluded discussion", in other words, "the logic of interpreting language as possessing political intent was internalized and natural to the degree that it required and allowed no explanation."⁴³

The criticism and labelling of Zhong Yicheng underscores the importance of his use of language, both written and spoken. Zhong finds it odd that his "political history and actual performance" are not a concern of his critics; in fact, the critics do not even question him about it. When the Red Guards do mention his past membership in the underground Communist Party, they focus on the language, both written and oral, that would validate this membership, which, of course, he cannot produce or prove:

“Your history is one of fabrication from top to bottom. You’re not telling the truth. Your problem is very serious. People like you have more than enough qualifications for us to send you to the Public Security Special Division. Some not as bad as you have been executed. You yourself know for sure what sleazy bastards you all are. You entered the Party at fifteen and were an alternate member branch secretary at seventeen—who do you think you’re kidding? Did you fill out a form? Who approved you? What oath did you take? Why was there only one person who recommended you . . . ?”⁴⁴

“你的历史，彻头彻尾的伪造，不老实，你的问题很严重。本来，像你这样的，交给公安局专政，条件满够，比你轻的都有枪毙的。一群什么样的牛鬼蛇神，乌龟王八蛋，你们自己清楚。什么十五岁入党，十七岁候补党员当支部书记，骗谁？你填表了么？谁批准的？在哪里宣的誓？为什么只有一个介绍人 ?”

The criticism of Zhong Yicheng’s innate rightist orientation also focuses on his use of language:

Zhong Yicheng once ridiculed a certain leader for his verbosity . . . Zhong Yicheng once said this or that document, bulletin, or data was useless . . . Zhong Yicheng said there were problems in the relationship between the Party and the people. . . More and more, until Zhong Yicheng himself was totally confused.⁴⁵

钟亦成曾经嘲笑过某个领导同志讲话罗嗦，钟亦成曾经说过许多文件，简报，材料无用，钟亦成曾经说过我们的党群关系有问题，. 越揭越多，使钟亦成自己也完全懵了。

Zhong Yicheng cannot analyze his emotions, but he is and for some time has been afraid of language; when he sees his colleague Song Ming “clutching a red pencil, engrossed in reading and making notes all over the critical essay” (about Zhong), he is apprehensive and remembers his fears at seeing notes on Song’s calendar in the past. The branding of rightists is carried out through the offices of critics who “exposed and criticized by means of slogans the most inflammatory words possible.”⁴⁶ Even the faith in the Party which Zhong maintains throughout his trial is mediated through language sources rather than life experience:

I knew the Party had been put together by an anxious country and a worried people, by the flower of the Chinese race and all the social classes; it was the sad, fervent song and the unselfish creation of a people willing to bear a cross for their liberation. Have you read “Wonderful China” by the war martyr Fang Zhimin? Have you read the poetry Xia Minghan wrote before he went to his execution? We have read them and know they are real.⁴⁷

我知道，中国共产党是由民族和阶级的精华，由忧国忧民，慷慨悲歌，大公无私，为了民族和阶级的解放甘愿背十字架的人组成的。你读过方

志敏烈士的，<<可爱的中国>>吗？你读过夏明翰烈士的就义诗吗？我们都读过的，我们知道这都是真的。

Bolshevik Salute places the manipulation of language at the experiential centre for post-1949 intellectuals; the modernist structure of the story implies the difficulty of understanding or escaping from the predicament of an individual controlled by the language of any given historical moment. However, Wang Meng theorizes on the possibility of distance and perspective in the character of the Gray Shadow (灰影子). The shadow is uninvolved in the struggles of the time. In one image he dresses modishly, sporting long hair and a filter cigarette “dangling from the side of his mouth,” and spends his time playing the Hawaiian guitar and listening to music from Hong Kong; in others he is a middle-aged or elderly man. The Gray Shadow has seen through and rejected the rhetoric of the post-1949 years and believes only in “love, youth, and freedom.” Zhong Yicheng listens to the Shadow and considers his standpoint, but ultimately he rejects his cynically realistic perspective as morally demeaning. The unattractive stance of the Gray Shadow implies the moral degradation inherent in an individual’s being distanced from “reality,” even if that reality is available only through an inaccurate and misleading language. Zhong Yicheng’s rejection of the Gray Shadow is another example of the moralistic didacticism characteristic of post-1949 Chinese socialist realism.

A limited perspective is acquired by the character Ling Xue, who insists on viewing Zhong Yicheng’s situation as a “temporary fury” resulting from a deviation from the “normal workings” of the Party. Using logic to deny the validity of the “analysis” of Zhong’s

poetry, she criticizes Zhong for believing everything he hears and for his enthusiasm and naivetè. Like the Gray Shadow, she is criticizing Zhong for his lack of perspective on the manipulation of language characteristic of the times, in which values are inverted: ‘How can you say black is white and a good person bad?’ However, in that her social involvement is not as intense as Zhong’s—she is criticized largely for her association with Zhong Yicheng rather than for anything she herself has said or done, and she is not labelled as a rightist or beaten by Red Guards—Ling Xue cannot function as a moral alternative. Her role is limited to that of an intelligent if somewhat passive bystander who can only lend her support to the morally and socially engaged Zhong Yicheng. The author’s positioning of the logical, realistic character in a role auxiliary to the naïve, enthusiastic main character devalues Ling’s approach as somewhat too detached, although not to the point of moral bankruptcy characteristic of the Gray Shadow.

Although Wang Meng appears to blame the naivetè of people like Zhong Yicheng for the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, the alternatives shown by Ling Xue or the Gray Shadow are not attractive or involved enough to function as criticisms of Zhong Yicheng’s emotional nature. Thus, although logical realism is (logically) at least temporarily correct, emotional participation turns out to be morally preferable.

Contrasted with this language-controlled existence are two attractive alternatives: one is Zhong Yicheng’s earlier life as a worker for the revolution, and the second is the life of a peasant. Both revolutionary workers and peasants exist through their participation in concrete physical work as opposed to the largely bureaucratic existence that involves Zhong Yicheng in paperwork

(written language) and human relations (oral language). Wang Meng hints at the possibility of an ideal world in which oral or written language possesses a vital link to action and the material world as the offspring of human knowledge of that world. As previously noted, the poetry of Zhong Yicheng inspires children to want to visit the countryside and see the wheat, and when Zhong is sent to the countryside to begin his labour, Ling Xue encourages him to express the delight of country living in poetry. When he worked for the Party before 1949, the young Zhong Yicheng used “progressive publications from Hong Kong and Shanghai, to inspire the minds of the young people and help them see the truth.”⁴⁸

In all these examples, the relationship between language and action or the phenomenal world is harmonious and without contradiction. However, in post-1949 society, this natural and beneficial link has been distorted, placing language and action in diametrically opposing positions, with action functioning as “true” reality and language as a misrepresentation of that reality.

Zhong Yicheng attempts to bring up his past service as an active revolutionary in the Communist Party to defend himself against the “slander” of critics during the Anti-Rightist Campaign and of Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, but, as noted before, his actions are not as important as his words. His own description of his pre-1949 work shows not only the unification of language with action, but also the extremely physical nature of revolutionary work—something that has totally disappeared in post-1949 China. The description of Zhong and Ling’s encounter with two remnant Nationalist soldiers is concrete in physical description and full of action:

*Just as Ling Xue was about to respond to Zhong Yicheng's greeting, a volley of shots rang out. Two soldiers from the Nationalist Party's defeated ranks fled in panic along the dried-up riverbed. One of them had an obvious wound in his leg; the green bandage wrapped around it was stained red, and he limped. The other, a tall man with a beard covering his face, carried a rifle; he looked like a demon. Zhong Yicheng jumped off the six-foot-high bridge onto the tall man, and they both fell to the ground. When he caught a whiff of the pungent, mouldy smell of the man's body, Zhong Yicheng raised his stick and called out, "Put down your guns and put up your hands!" The students all rushed over and encircled them.*⁴⁹

凌雪正要回答钟亦成的招呼，一阵枪声传来，沿着干涸了的旧河道，仓惶逃过来两个国民党败兵，有一个显然是腿部负了伤，绿裹腿被血迹染得殷红，一跛一拐。另一个是个大个子，满脸络腮胡子，手里端着步枪，像个凶神。钟亦成连思索都没思索，就从两米高的桥端向着这个大个子扑了过去，他和大个子一起摔倒在地上，他闻到了大个子身子的哈喇和酶锈的气味，他举起了“童子军”棍，又喝了一声：“缴枪，举起手来！”

这时，男学生和女学生也都冲过来，形成了一个包围圈。

The speeches of the leaders as they describe the victories and plans of the Party are perfect embodiments of their experience as active revolutionaries in the field, and Zhong Yicheng feels they have given him a “totally new way of thinking and speaking,” new concepts, and a “new language” that replaces the “empty claptrap” and “officials” of previous years. Zhong Yicheng characterizes their words as “forthright, logical, confident [and] surging with enthusiasm and strength.”⁵⁰

As the 1950s continue, this unification of word and action disintegrates, to be replaced by a dualistic relationship that is much worse than pre-revolutionary “empty claptrap” or “officialese.” True revolutionary action loses its position of importance and does not even seem to be an option.

By the late 1950s, the contrasting ideologies represented by language and action are indicated in the “cure” for the problems Zhong has manifested in his poem and words: labour in the country. Labour, the cure commonly prescribed for intellectual ills since the thirties, is supposed to re-educate his mind and thus reform his words. In the Chinese society of the late 1950s, the promotion of peasant labour as an alternative to intellectual work had been in effect for over twenty years, yet in the novel it makes its first appearance during the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. Zhong Yicheng’s work in the countryside turns out to be the opposite of his life as a bureaucrat; replacing speeches, essays, and critiques is hard physical labour. Zhong Yicheng believes in the efficacy of the cure:

*Millions of years ago labour turned monkeys
into humans. Millions of years later in China,*

*physical labour was exercising its great strength to purify thinking and create a new soul.*⁵¹

几十万年前，劳动使猿猴变成了人。几十万年后的中国，体力劳动也正发挥着它净化思想，再造灵魂的伟力。

The narrative details the physicality of labour, describing the sweat that pours off Zhong Yicheng's body and the feel of the earth at his feet. The most physically sensuous experience is the most elevating:

*He scooped faeces out of latrines. The smell of faeces made him feel glorious and peaceful. One bucket after another, he mixed the liquid with earth, feeling from his heart that was really and truly delightful.*⁵²

他掏大粪。粪的臭味使他觉得光荣和心安。一挑一挑粪稀和黄土拌在一起，他确实从心眼里觉得可爱

Zhong Yicheng “forgets himself” in labour, which is revolutionized and united with pre-liberation revolutionary fighting by the label “struggle”:

At three in the morning, when it seemed as if his body had just hit the pillow, he started the “morning struggle” of carrying manure to the terraced fields . . . At noon, when his mouth was still

*chewing salted vegetables and cornbread, he started the ‘afternoon struggle.’ In the evening, after he drank two big bowls of gruel, it was time for the “evening struggle”. . . People are truly resourceful. When they call their overtime work some sort of “struggle,” they can get up an extra layer of extraordinary revolutionary fervour right away, just as if they were fighting, were in war and opening fire on their enemies, the capitalist classes, and their own thinking.*⁵³

夜里三点，好像脑袋才刚挨枕头，就起来“早战”了，把粪背到梯田上 中午嘴里还啃着咸菜和窝头，又开始“午战”了。晚上喝完两大碗稀粥，又是“夜战” 人真是有本事，把加班说成什么“战”，马上就增加了一层非凡的革命的色彩，原来他们是在战，在打仗，在向资产阶级，向自己思想中的敌人开火。

Zhong Yicheng is confident that his life in the country has purified his thinking, but he is surprised to find that over time he loses his enthusiasm for reform and develops an “emptiness of the spirit.” The problem is that Zhong Yicheng and the other rightists sentenced to labour in the countryside are not given the opportunity to show that the cure has been successful; the “papers and documents” that label him a rightist are still more influential than his actual work. The primacy of language in determining identity, function, and role is still beyond Zhong’s comprehension, yet in Wang Meng’s striking contrast between physical and bureaucratic work, language maintains its powerful position. Physical labour

stands as a symbolic alternative, yet, the dominance and prestige of language-related work is so great that physical labour remains only as a symbolic authority.

The absolute inability of language to transmit physical reality accurately is clearly revealed in the episode of 1959, the fire chapter.

Zhong Yicheng shouted again, and not paying any attention to whether the other “elements” in his dormitory were awake or not, dashed off in the direction of the flames. The light from the fire grew large and larger; the kitchen had already caught fire from the inside. “Fire! Fire! Fire!” Zhong Yicheng lost his voice screaming, and woke up the soundly sleeping workers of the road-construction crew. People yelled and clamoured, the ding-dong of bells rang out, and some grabbed for their wash pans After a frenzied fight, the fire was quickly beaten.

As soon as the fire was thoroughly put out, Zhong Yicheng felt a piercing pain. Only then did he discover that over half of his hair had been burned off and his eyebrows were totally burned away. Burns were all over his face, his back, his hands, and his legs. He could not touch himself anywhere; in fact he could not even stand up because his feet were burned. His face twisted into an expression of pain, but before he could make a sound he lost consciousness.⁵⁴

钟亦城又喊了一声，不顾同宿舍的其他“分子”是否醒转，他跌跌撞撞地向着冒火的方向奔去。火光愈来愈大，厨房已经从内里着起来了。“火！火！！火！”钟亦城失声大叫，惊醒了熟睡的筑路队工人。人们喊叫着，吵闹着，叮叮当当，敲钟的敲钟，拿洗脸盆的拿洗脸盆。一场混战，总算迅速地把火扑灭了。

直到把火彻底扑灭之后，钟亦城才感到钻心的疼痛，他这才发现，头发烧掉了一多半，眉毛已经全烧光了，脸上，背上，手上，腿上，到处都是火伤，到处都挨不得碰不得了，不，连站也无法站了，他的脚也烧坏了。他脸上做了一个那么痛苦的，歪扭的表情，没等呻吟出声来就失去了知觉。

Zhong Yicheng risks his life to put out the fire, yet his action is distorted by the questions and comments of the interrogators. Reaffirming his previously determined identity in their admonition (“Don’t forget who you are!”), the interrogators illustrate the same random yet predetermined relationship between action (Zhong’s action in the fire) and language (their interpretation). Their explanation of Zhong Yicheng’s actions, which we as readers know is incorrect, is not merely a distortion of reality, but a reversal. As a young Chinese scholar comments in his book: “Wang Meng locates this falsifying relationship between language and action as an absolute and overwhelming aspect of Chinese intellectual society from 1949 to 1979.”⁵⁵

In *Bolshevik Salute*, modernist structure and technique work together to create an alienated, non-integrated intellectual identity.

Although Wang Meng's novella is carefully written to avoid criticism that may brand him as working against the Communist Party, he effectively challenges the insoluble dilemma that the Party has constructed for an individual attempting to define himself or herself as both "intellectual" and "revolutionary."

Notes

- ¹ *Bolshevik Salute* was first published in 1979 and later in Wang Meng's xiaoshuo baogao wenxue xuan (*Selected Works of Fiction and Reportage by Wang Meng* 王蒙小说报告文学选) Beijing, Beijing publishing House 1981, pp 222-308
- ² Wendy Larson, *Bolshevik Salute: A Modernist Chinese Novel*, University of Washinton Press, 1989
- ³ Robert E. Hegel, "An Exploration of the Chinese Literary Self," *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, ed. Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, p.13
- ⁴ *May Fourth to June Fourth—Fiction and Film in Twentieth-Century China* Ed. By E. Widmer & D. Wang, Harvard University Press, 1993, pp 167-193
- ⁵ Ibid.,
- ⁶ Ibid., p.168
- ⁷ Wendy Larson, p.4
- ⁸ *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3, p.2
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 2
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 2
- ¹¹ *An Acquaintance with Wang Meng for Readers Overseas in Selected Works of Wang Meng* Vol. I P. VII, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1989
- ¹² *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3 p. 3
- ¹³ Wendy Larson, p.133
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 133
- ¹⁵ Robert E. Hegel, "An Exploration of the Chinese Literary Self," *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, ed. Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney
- ¹⁶ Wendy Larson, p.7
- ¹⁷ *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3 p. 11
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p.11
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 21

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- 20 Ibid., p.18
- 21 Ibid., p.22
- 22 Ibid., p.26
- 23 Wendy Larson, pp.26-27
- 24 Ibid., 142-149
- 25 参见汪浩的 *王蒙小说语言论*, 第五章: 意识的河流--作为“内心独白”的小说语言, 花山文艺出版社, 1998, p. 129
- 26 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3 pp.38-39
- 27 Wendy Larson, p.134
- 28 In this chart, “CR” indicates an experience from the Cultural Revolution era of 1966-1976.
- 29 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3, p.29
- 30 Ibid., p.34
- 31 Ibid., p. 36
- 32 Ibid., pp.49-50
- 33 Wendy Larson, p.138
- 34 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3, p.68
- 35 Ibid., pp.68-69
- 36 Wendy Larson, p.140
- 37 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3, p.69
- 38 Fang, Xunjing, *Creating a New World of Art* in *Wenyi Bao*, August 1980 and Li Tuo, *Realism and Stream of Consciousness*, in *Shiyue*, April 1980, pp. 239-244
- 39 *王蒙小说语言论*, 第五章: 意识的河流--作为“内心独白”的小说语言, p.135
- 40 *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3 p. 2
- 41 Ibid., 48
- 42 Ibid., p.2
- 43 Wendy Larson, p. 145
- 44 Ibid., p.12

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- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p.6
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 23
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p.29
- ⁴⁸ Wendy Larson, pp. 142-145
- ⁴⁹ *Wang Meng Collection* Vol. 3, p.10
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.17-19
- ⁵¹ Ibid., p.52
- ⁵² Ibid., p.53
- ⁵³ Ibid., p.54
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 60-61
- ⁵⁵ 王蒙小说言论, 第六章: 作为象征性的小说语言, p.148

Conclusion

Wang Meng's Place in Chinese Contemporary Literature

在茫茫的生活海洋，时间与空间的海洋，文学与艺术的海洋之中，寻找我的位置，我的支持点，我的主题，我的题材，我的形式和风格。

--- 王 蒙

In the vast ocean of life, of time and space, of literature and art, I had to find my position, my fulcrum, my own subjects, themes, form, and style.

---- Wang Meng

Wang Meng, undoubtedly, is one of the most important writers in China today. His works have been consistently popular among Chinese readers, and they receive wide attention both in and outside of the country. Wang is an extremely prolific writer, producing close to one million words (for literary fiction only) in the six years from 1979 to 1984 alone.

Most significantly, Wang's part in the development of an innovative literature in Post-Mao era China can hardly be exaggerated. A well-known Chinese reviewer once pointed out that: "From the very beginning of Wang Meng's re-emergence in the literary world in 1978, critics have been monitoring his creative activities."¹ Another reviewer, commenting on the literary movement toward a healthy pluralism in 1984, extolled him as "the representative figure" of the movement, who "has made an

outstanding contribution” to it. The reviewer went on to acclaim *Butterfly* as the “most consummate” of his works published during this period.² Liu Zaifu³, a leading literary critic in post-Mao China, in his keynote speech at the “Seminar on Ten Years of New Era Literature in China”⁴, characterised the literature of the period as a profound reflection of the historic tragedy of the Cultural Revolution, a reflection that went through three deepening stages: the political reflection that extended beyond the Cultural Revolution into the legacy since 1949, the cultural reflection that traced the cause of the Cultural Revolution to its historical roots in the national cultural-psychological structure, and the *self-scrutiny* reflection that would involve the whole nation in a commonly shared deep confession and concern. Wang Meng was the only author whose works were cited as respectively representative of all the stages.⁵ Liu’s analysis properly underlines Wang Meng’s achievements and provides another approach to the understanding of his works.

Wang Meng’s artistic style is the result of a conglomeration of various methods and techniques. The most striking feature that marks him off as almost unique among his fellow writers is his bold use of the “stream-of-consciousness” technique which, though common place in the West, was virtually unheard of in China in the late 1970s, when Wang began his initial experimentation with this literary style. As with the Western “stream-of-consciousness” writers Wang partially modelled his works on, neither the plot of the novel nor the characterisation in it engages much of his attention. Wang Meng focuses his effort largely, sometimes exclusively, on the mental state of his characters -- their psychological process viewed as a constant flow of ideas and emotions, both conscious and subconscious: “Man’s soul in its naked or half-naked state, with its wounds and pollutions, beauty and nobleness, constitutes the recurring theme of his works.”⁶ Some critics have called attention to Wang’s abundant use of symbolism, considering it a golden key to the understanding of his writing: “the exaltation at the abstract,

intangible truth; the intimation of the mystery of life; the weird combination of words and images; the contrast of colour and sound. They stress that many of Wang Meng's free associations as manifested in "stream-of-consciousness" are in fact loaded with symbolic implications."⁷

Wang Meng, however, does not crave form for form's sake; he has summed up the unfailing sources of his creative efforts thus:

*"Ranging widely over this great land,
Through thirty years of wind and rain."*⁸

故国八千里，风云三十年

The first line refers to the distance Wang Meng travelled from Beijing to Xinjiang where he was sent to labour after being labelled as a rightist; the second to the rapid succession of social upheavals, the vicissitudes of fortune he and his people have undergone since 1949. The vast and tumultuous world, condensed and pent up in him, now cries for relief - for immediate expression. Traditional techniques have proved too rigid and limiting for him. He needs a form that can more efficiently contain and harness the surging thoughts and emotions of an ardent though meditative soul. "What I am looking for is a mode of expression with a great capacity,"⁹ he asserted. To achieve this Wang Meng is determined to employ whatever techniques that strike him as effective.

Maxine Hong Kingston once commented in one of her book reviews: "For true understanding of the Chinese condition, and the human condition in our time, Wang Meng is a vital writer. He works in the tradition of the statesman-poet, bringing realistic vision to the literary world while inspiring us with stories of wisdom, imagination, and humour."¹⁰ Professor Wendy Larson points out in her book: "Wang [Meng] had long been a popular and respected, yet

controversial, writer, having published innovative fiction that depicted the psychological underside of political life in modern China.”¹¹

In conclusion, it can be argued that it is not easy to find another Chinese writer who has challenged so many readers in China today in the way that Wang Meng has. Because of that, no other Chinese writer has had to summon the courage to face irreverent, defiant or merely exploitative responses from the reading public to the same extent that Wang Meng has. It would be hard to think of another writer in China that could compare with Wang Meng, in terms of his rich literary works; his complex and unusual personal life experiences; his consummate writing skill; his well-planned literary structures; his colourful use of narrative voice; his talent in using his own style of fictional language; his ability to appropriate literary styles from a diverse range of sources, both traditional and modern, Chinese and foreign, and synthesise them into something uniquely his own; his brave and liberal attitude; his close attention to developments in the society; his detailed description of the personal life of his characters; his tumultuous political life; his sufferings and his successes as a professional writer. In his nearly fifty-year long writing career, he has deservedly become one of China's most noteworthy literary figures, adapting his literary style in accordance with the changing social, political and cultural milieu, but also influencing those changes, through his insightful perceptions and incisive literary commentary on China's recent history, and on the human condition.

To study Wang Meng and analyse his works is a huge project. It is impossible to look at all the major issues involved and express them clearly within the scope of just one thesis. It perhaps would require several books to discuss all the matters and issues relating to different topics about Wang Meng and his literary works. In choosing the topic for this thesis, I realise that it may be

somewhat too broad, and therefore very challenging. Having said that, it is only an initial attempt to examine a selection of Wang Meng's stories, mainly those stories that have been largely overlooked by other scholars and literary commentators for detailed study. In particular, this thesis adopts the approach of translating selected passages from different stories written by Wang Meng from the 1950s to the 1990s, and examining them against Western critical theories, in order to provide a focused textual analysis of those stories that emerged in the broad context of contemporary Chinese literature. By doing so, the thesis attempts to enrich and develop established Western theories such as Realism, Socialist Realism, Modernism, Postmodernism and "stream-of-consciousness."

Notes

- ¹ Chen Li, “*Wang Meng yanjiu shuping*” (*A Review on the Study of Wang Meng* 王蒙研究书评), *Dangdai wenyi tansuo*, (当代文艺探索) No. 3, 1986
- ² Tang Yiming, “*Wang Meng de yishu gexin yu zhongguo wenxue de xiandaihua*” (*Wang Meng’s Artistic Innovations and the Modernization of Chinese Literature* 王蒙的艺术个性与中国文学的现代化), *Jiuzhou xuekan* (Chinese Culture Quarterly 九洲学刊), Hong Kong, No.2, 1986, pp. 132-134
- ³ Liu Zaifu was a prominent figure in literary criticism circles in the mid-1980s in China. While holding the position of editor-in-chief of the *Literary Review*, he attempted to replace Maoism with Western theories of subjectivity and post-modernism.
- ⁴ This two-day special “*Seminar on Ten Years of New Era Literature in China*” was held in Shanghai in June 1986.
- ⁵ Liu Zaifu, *The Main Current of the Literature of the New Era*, *Wenhui Bao*, September 8-10, 1986
- ⁶ *Introduction in Wang Meng—Alienation*, translated by Nancy T. Lin and Tong Qi Lin, Joint Publishing (H.K.) Co., Ltd. 1993, p. 6
- ⁷ Ibid., p.7
- ⁸ 夏冠洲, p.8
- ⁹ 王蒙: *我是王蒙--我的文学追求* p.177
- ¹⁰ This quote is from the book review by Kingston who contributed this to the publication of the book *The Stubborn Porridge and Other Stories*, a translation copy of Wang Meng’s stories by Zhou Hong in 1994.
- ¹¹ Larson, *Introduction in Bolshevik Salute, A Modernist Chinese Novel*, inside front jacket page, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1989

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**The Thertre of Gao Xingjian: experimentation within the Chinese
context and towards new modes of representation**

PhD Thesis by S. R. Quah

Cambridge University, 1999

The Three Voices of Maurice Gee's Plumb Trilogy

Master Thesis by Wang Xiaoning

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www.guoxue.com	国学网
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www.cptoday.net	今日心理
www.ceqq.com/mjzy-mz/001.htm	绝对密宗
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新世纪

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新语丝

Appendix One

An Open letter on ‘Stream-of-consciousness’

Dear Fellow Students Tian Liwei and Ye Zhihua:

I received your letter and wish to thank you for the many enthusiastic, though perhaps overly laudatory, things you said about ‘Eyes of the Night.’

Perhaps writers of fiction do not understand the methods of creation too well. Most of the times they write a story then wait for those who do not write fiction to analyse, appraise, and make deductions and stylistic distinctions about it on the basis of methods of creation. What one thinks about in the process of writing is the subject matter (*tikai*), the emotional tone, and the particular flour or aspect of life that one wants to reflect. Of course, one has to choose a method that is capable of expressing one’s own intentions and actions. Method is secondary to subject matter (I am referring to subject matter in the narrow sense).

I do admit, however, that I consciously experiment with various techniques of fiction writing. At about the same time I wrote “Eyes of the Night,” I also published “Geshen” [The Goddess of Song], “Youyou Cuncao Xin” [The Barber’s Story], “Youren he Yan” [friends and Smoke], and others, each very different from the other and all of them even more different from “Eyes of the Night.”

I have to admit that not long ago I read some foreign “stream-of-consciousness” novels and stories. After finishing some of them I felt just as you did – they made me feel confused. Naturally, I can neither accept nor indiscriminately imitate those kinds of morbid, abnormal, mystical, or solitary mental states. They did, however, inspire me to do something: write about people’s feelings (Ganjin).

From the materialistic point of view, feelings – some people call them artistic intuitions – refer to people’s initial instantaneous reactions to the world, to life, and to objects. If a person’s heart (Xinling) can be compared to a piano, then every person, event, or situation in life can be described as single little hammer. The sound given off when those little hammer strikes the heart-piano is feeling.

But not only can people feel, they can also think. Every one of those “little hammers” will in turn be assimilated, and digested, thereby becoming organised, and arranged in an orderly sequence by a normal brain. The resultant “big hammers” that have been arranged in orderly sequence will also strike the piano, which will give off a more distinct and purposeful sound. This is the second sound. However, it has generally lost the freshness, vitality, fluidity, and richness of the first sound.

If the writer is a very intelligent, very thoughtful, and very experienced person (one who has seen a great deal of life); if revolutionary theort and a progressive worldview are for him not merely labels or empty phrases, if they are not just medicinal ointment plastered on his face or his buttocks, but have long since become an integral part of his blood and muscle, his nerves , his sensory organs, and his soul (Linhun), then even the first sound will neither be superficial nor completely confused and disconnected. This fluid and multifaceted first

sound will already be replete with elements leading it toward the second sound. Actually, any pure, simple, and momentarily fleeting intuition will also, to a greater or lesser, a deeper or more superficial degree, reflect the perceiver's inner heart, his thoughts, his point of view, his tendencies, his upbringing, his interests, his temperament, and his character. This mirror that is the heart is, in the end, much more complicated than an ordinary mirror, and this piano that is the heart has, in the final analysis, many different registers, which are each of varying importance.

Putting it this way is somewhat obscure, so I'll give an example. Among Lu Xun's collection of prose poems, *Ye Cao* [Wild Grass], there are several that depict feelings, and on a certain level of meaning we could even go ahead and call them "stream-of-consciousness" works. "Qui Ye" [Autumn Night], "Hao de Gushi" [A Good Story]. And 'Xue' [Snow], are all of this type. Some people believe that Lu Xun was being allegorical or writing sublime words with deep meaning in these poems, and they will stop at nothing to prove that the "jujube trees" allude to this, the 'little pink flowers' allude to that, and the "strong bird" alludes to something else again. Then there are those who come right out and say that Lu Xun was simply describing physical scenes, describing nature, and 'had no thematic intention.' Both of these approaches are mistaken. (Please see my 1960s essay "Xue de Lianxiang" [the Connotations of Snow], in *Gansu Wenyi*, No 7, 1979.) What Lu Xun wrote were his feelings, his feelings that can only be sensed but cannot be explained in words; but in the end they can still be explained in words – they can be analysed.

Li Shangyin's "Untitled" poems should also be understood in this way.

When Sholokov writes that after Akisinia died, Gregor looked up and saw a great black sun in the sky, he is simply describing his feelings. If we describe the sun realistically, we can write that it is fiery red, golden yellow, orange, pale, or sallow . . . or any other colour, but under no circumstances can the sun ever become black.

From all of this we can see that the “stream-of-consciousness” method of depicting feelings is really neither preposterous nor baseless, nor is it necessarily decadent, debased, or idealistic to the extent that it causes one to go insane or leave home to become a foreign monk.

The “stream-of-consciousness” technique places particular stress on associations of thought, and this can quite readily arouse people’s interest. What associations of thought reflect are neither the syntheses, inferences, or judgements of ratiocination nor the continuous movements that occur when real or imaginary things and events take form in time and space within memory, narration, or the imagination; what they reflect is a person’s imagination moving about freely and quickly. When the materials of reality pass through the rearranging and recombining process of thought association, new and variegated patterns emerge from the old in great splendor, just as in a kaleidoscope. They appear to be confused and disorganized, but they actually have their own inner unity.

Chinese literature has always emphasised thought associations. The *xing* of *fu*, *bi*, *xing* is simply an example of thought association. *Xing* and *bi* are quite different. In *bi* the theme comes first and one employs images to explain it – this was originally called “the image in the mind” (*Yi Zhong zhi Xiang*). *Xing*, however, is a case of “the meanings in the image” (*Xiang Zhong Zhi Yi*); that is, the images come first and one figures out the theme or meaning from them. Emphasizing somewhat the technique of *xing* will probably prove very helpful for our

creative works, which have suffered greatly from an overemphasis on thematic content.

There is even less reason to fear ‘fluidity.’ Dialectical materialists have always believed that the world (including people’s spiritual or mental world) is fluid, changing, and full of inner discrepancies, contradictions, struggles, transformations, transitions, and leaps. Of course, there are still relatively stable elements within fluidity, and fleetingly transitory feelings – impressions – still embody long term or even permanent elements.

I am not a theoretician, but I hope to examine the “stream-of-consciousness” technique from the point of view of “one divides into two,” to be able to employ the worldview of dialectical materialism to analyse and sublimate it; to absorb what is reasonable in it in order to make our literary creations richer, more diverse, and a little more meaningful; and also to portray the human soul in a manner more thoroughly profound and true to life.

We must have a correct attitude toward psychological depiction. To prostrate ourselves before those vast stretches of psychological depiction in foreign works, or to simply ridicule all of the psychological depiction in foreign works, or to arbitrarily and triumphantly assert that the national characteristic of Chinese fiction is that it does not contain psychological depiction – all of these attitudes are mistaken. We must admit that the development of production, society, and civilization has caused the life experiences and the attendant psychological activities of modern people to become extremely complex. The psychological activities of people with a high level of culture will always be somewhat richer. Even the artistic interests and appreciation of workers and peasants are also changing. Before Liberation, workers (especially

young workers) are also reading “stream-of-consciousness” fiction. Employing a million stratagems to profane human dignity and obliterate human worth, Lin Biao and the Gang of Four didn’t even permit people to have any psychological life, nor did they allow people to have any feelings, interests, imagination, or hopes . . . People thus became brutal, dull, and numb. Under these conditions, for our literary works to pay some attention to psychological activities – sentiment, mental states, and the spiritual world – is of great significance in the development of socialist people, in improving spiritual civilization, and in accomplishing our formidable and lofty mission as “engineers of the soul.”

More and more young people are enjoying fiction, poetry, and films that depict psychological activity, and more and more young people want to understand the secret of “stream-of-consciousness.” None of this is accidental. ‘stream-of-consciousness’ has two opposing effects on readers. On the negative side it so confuses those who are not accustomed to it that they don’t know what is being said; but the wonderful thing about it is that it leaves plenty of room for rumination, rethinking, imagination, speculation, and analysis on the part of reader. How does one change “the first sound” into ‘the second sound’? How does one change perceptual knowledge into rational knowledge? To a great extent, the responsibility for completing the process is the reader’s. But what enormous pleasure there is in this manner of appreciating literature!

Of course, we must be fully aware of the dangers of assimilating and drawing lessons from this technique. We are in absolute disagreement with mysticism and antirationalism. We believe that it is wrong to place feelings, impressions, and thought associations in opposition to reflection, conceptualisation, and judgements. We believe that the former are the foundations for the latter and that the latter are the

results of the former. We continue to believe that works of literature should still contain ideas and themes, but the thematic ideas should not be so simple that they can be summarized in just one sentence or so obviously superficial that their import can be seen at a mere glance with nothing left over. We do not exclusively study abnormal, sick, or psychedelic psychology either. We use a little “stream-of-consciousness” not in order to go insane, or to give vent to some tragic *mal de siècle*; but rather in order to portray a more profound, more beautiful, more ample, and more civilized soul. We also do not agree with the practice of placing psychology and life in opposition to society. When we write about psychology, feelings, and consciousness we have not forgotten that they are reflections of life; we have not forgotten their social significance. It is just that we hope to be able to write with “exceptional insight,” and with more depth, more distinctive characteristic, more “flavour.” For all these reasons, our “stream-of-consciousness” is not a stream-of-consciousness that urges people to escape reality by an inward flight; it is rather a healthy and substantial self-feeling that urges people to face both the objective and the subjective worlds, to love life and to love the human heart.

In conclusion, I must return to what I said in the beginning – in the final analysis, the methods and techniques of creation must be subordinated to content. If we engage in formalism we can only attain a superficial mastery, like some of those “slow chase” scenes (slow motion scenes of boys and girls chasing each other) in recent films that have already evoked derisive laughter from audiences. In order to assimilate and draw on the experience of something, we must digest it, use it for our own purposes, reform it, develop it, and create it anew. This is all the more true because we are well aware that the “stream-of-consciousness” technique abroad has long since reached the height of its

popularity and has declined. Why should we go so far as to “use the foreigner’s foot-binding cloth for a necktie”?

I hope to hear many opinions of young people concerning contemporary literature.

Appendix Two

王蒙著作年表（1953 – 2000）

1953年

王蒙中国少年报上发表了她的第一篇作品：《《礼貌的故事》》。

1955年

在人民文学杂志上发表短篇小说《《小豆儿》》。这是王蒙正式公开发表的第一篇文学作品。

1956年

发表短篇小说《《春节》》，《《组织部来了个年轻人》》，《《冬雨》》。

1957年

散文诗《《新年》》，长篇小说《《青春万岁》》在上海文汇报上连载。另有诗作《《错误》》，《《洗礼》》，《《春风》》等。

1962年

发表短篇小说《《眼睛》》，《《夜雨》》。

1963年

发表散文《《春满吐鲁番》》。

1978年

发表短篇小说《《队长 书记 野猫和半截筷子的故事》》，《《最宝贵的》》（获1978年全国优秀短篇小说奖），《《光明》》；报告文学《《火之歌》》等。

1979年

发表中篇小说《布礼》；短篇小说《歌神》，《友人如烟》，《夜的眼》，《悠悠寸草心》（获1979年全国优秀短篇小说奖），《表姐》。出版长篇小说《青春万岁》（1981年被评为全国中学生最喜爱的十本书之一，并于1986年获人民文学奖）。

1980年

发表中篇小说《蝴蝶》（获全国第一届1979-1980中篇小说奖）；短篇小说《说客盈门》，《买买提处长轶事》，《春之声》（获1980年全国优秀短篇小说奖），《风筝飘带》（获短篇小说北京文学奖），《海的梦》。出版中短篇小说集《冬雨》。

1981年

发表小说《杂色》，《如歌的行板》，《湖光》；短篇小说《深的湖》，《温暖》，《心的光》，《最后的陶》；散文《浮光掠影记西德》，《别衣阿华》，《旅美花絮》等。出版评论集《当你拿起笔》，小说及评论集《“夜的眼”及其他》和《王蒙小说报告文学选》。同年日本出版发行中篇小说《蝴蝶》日文版。

1982年

发表中篇小说《相见时难》（获全国第二届1981-1982中篇小说奖），《莫须有事件——荒唐的游戏》；短篇小说《惶惑》，《春夜》，《听海》；综论《一个值得探讨的问题——谈我国作家的非学者化》。出版中篇小说集《深的湖》，散文集《德美两国纪行》和《想见时难》单行本。北京外文出版社出版中短篇小说集英，法文版。

1983年

发表中篇小说《风息浪止》，《淡灰色的眼珠》，《虚掩的土屋小院》；短篇小说《青龙潭》，《黄杨树根之死》，《木箱深处的紫绸花服》，《哦，穆罕默德·阿麦德》，《好汉子衣斯麻儿》，《葡萄的精

灵》》（获第一届1983-1984短篇小说百花奖）；创作谈《漫话文学创作特性探讨中的一些思想方法问题》》（获首届上海文学奖）。出版评论集《漫话小说创作》。北京外文出版社出版中短篇小说集《蝴蝶》英文版。

1984年

发表中篇小说《逍遥游》，《鹰谷》；短篇小说《爱弥拉姑娘的爱情》，《边城华彩》，综论《对于现实生活的反映，反应和呼唤》（获光明日报优秀理论文章一等奖）；散文《塔什干晨雨》，《访苏心潮》（获全国第三届1984-1985报告文学奖）。出版中短篇小说集《木箱深处的紫绸花服》，系列小说《淡灰色的眼珠——在伊犁》，散文集《橘黄色的梦》。牡丹江民族出版社出版《青春万岁》朝文版。匈牙利欧洲出版社出版短篇小说集《说客盈门》匈文版。罗马尼亚书籍出版社出版短篇小说集《深的湖》罗文版。

1985年

发表短篇小说《高原的风》，《无言的树》，《冬天的话题》，《临街的窗》；诗作《柏林墙》等四首。出版《王蒙中篇小说集》，中短篇小说集《妙仙庵剪影》，评论集《王蒙谈创作》和《创作是一种燃烧》。墨西哥学院出版社出版《王蒙短篇小说集》西班牙文版。新疆青年出版社出版《相见时难》维吾尔文版。

1986年

发表中篇小说《名医梁有志传奇》（获全国传奇文学奖，并被中篇小说选刊评为优秀中篇小说）；“新大陆人”系列小说之一《轮下》，之二《海鸥》，之三《卡普琴诺》，之四《画家“沙特”诗话》，之五《温柔》，短篇小说《致爱丽丝》，《失去又找到了月光园的故事》；诗作《诗的幽默》（11首），《纽约诗草》（3首）等32首。翻译并发表德国俳句专家萨比妮·梭模凯普所作《德语俳句十二首》（英译

汉)。出版长篇小说《活动变人形》，报告文学散文集《访苏心潮》，中篇小说集《王蒙集》。出版《王蒙选集》。

1987年

发表短篇小说《来劲》，《庭院深深》；中篇小说《要字8679号——推理小说新作》，《选择的历程》，《虫影》，并发表一批诗作，累计62首。出版中短篇小说集《加拿大的月亮》，评论集《文学的诱惑》。北京外文出版社出版中短篇小说集《蝴蝶》德文版。东京德间书店出版中短篇小说集《淡灰色的眼珠——在伊犁》日文版。瑞士第三世界对话出版社出版中短篇小说集《夜的眼》德文版。意大利米兰赛维勒书局出版长诗单行本《西藏的遐思》意文版。

1988年

发表中篇小说《一嚏千里》，《球星奇遇记》；短篇小说《没情况儿》，《夏天的肖像》，《十字架上》，《组接》；散文《苏州赋》；杂文《诬告有益论》；综论《文学：失却轰动效应以后》；诗作《访日俳句》（14首），《阳朔行》（18首）等。出版诗集《旋转的秋千》。台湾远景出版实业公司出版中短篇小说集《蝴蝶》。台湾新地出版社出版中短篇小说集《加拿大的月亮》。香港天地图书公司出版长篇小说《活动变人形》。北京外文出版社出版中短篇小说集《王蒙小说集》俄文版。

1989年

发表短篇小说《坚硬的稀粥》（获第四届1989-1990短篇小说百花奖），《初春回旋曲》，《神鸟》，《纸海勾沉——尹薇薇》（获第四届1988-1990 十月文学奖），《我又梦见了你》；评论《何必悲观：对一种文学批评逻辑的质疑》，《我国社会主义初级阶段的文化刍议——一个笔记式的提纲》；发表《王蒙，王干对话录》；发表诗作《游》，《雨天》，《蓬莱》；散文诗《落叶，树及其他》；有关《红楼梦》的文章《蘑菇，宝玉与“我”的探求》，《时间是多重的吗？》。新

疆少年出版社出版系列小说集《淡灰色的眼珠》维吾尔文版。民族出版社出版中短篇小说集《心的光》维吾尔文版。北京外文出版社出版《相见集》，《雪球集》（均为小说集）英文版。华盛顿大学出版社出版中篇小说《布礼》单行本英文版。巴黎人道报出版社出版中篇小说《布礼》单行本法文版。韩国中央日报社出版长篇小说《活动变人形》朝文版。米兰加尔赞蒂书局出版长篇小说《活动变人形》意文版。出版新诗集《旋转的秋千》。

1990年

发表短篇小说《我又梦见了你》，《现场直播》，《阿咪的故事》，《话，话，话》，《济南》；关于《红楼梦》的文章《搜捡大观院评说》，《贾宝玉论》，《红楼梦二题》，《天情的体验——宝黛爱情散论》，《变奏与狂想》；关于李商隐的文章《一篇〈锦瑟〉》，《雨在义山》，《通境与通情——也谈李商隐的无题七律》。翻译并发表了美国作家约翰·契弗的短篇小说《自我矫治》和《恋歌》；德国东方学家萨比妮·梭模凯普的爱情组诗《短歌十二章》（俳句，英译汉）。出版中短篇小说集《球星奇遇记》。德国波鸿布洛克迈耶出版社出版中短篇小说集《王蒙小说集》德文版。民族出版社出版中短篇小说集《心的光》荣维吾尔文版。

1991年

发表短篇小说《室内乐三章》，《小说瘤》；中篇小说《蜘蛛》；微型小说《成语新编》系列；散文《海的颜色》，《无花果》，《宰牛》，《我们大队的同事们》，《我爱喝稀粥》等；杂文《作家书简与友谊》，《话说这碗粥》等；关于《红楼梦》的文章《伟大的混沌》；关于李商隐的文章《对李商隐及其诗作的一些理解》，《〈锦瑟〉的野狐禅》。翻译并发表了新西兰作家帕·格丽斯的短篇小说《天地之间》，詹·傅瑞姆的短篇小说《天鹅》，伊恩·夏普的短篇小说《白雪公主》和《天赐马》，弗朗西斯·庞德的短篇小说《简明三联画》和《八角形》，詹尼弗·康普顿的短篇小说《费伯镇》。出版关于

<<红楼梦的专著<<红楼启示录>>，文学评论集<<风格散记>>，中短篇小说集<<中国当代作家选集丛书·王蒙集>>，中短篇小说和翻译作品集<<我又梦见了你>>。

1992年

出版长篇小说<<恋爱的季节>>，这是“季节”系列长篇小说的第一部。发表短篇小说，微型小说13篇；综论<<漫话文艺效果>>，<<再说文艺效果>>，<<题材与作家>>，<<建设与文艺>>，<<为了民族的生机>>，<<钗黛合一新论——兼论文学人物的评析角度>>。出版随笔集<<欲读书结>>，中短篇小说集<<坚硬的稀粥>>，文艺评论集<<王蒙·王干对话录>>。东京白帝社出版长篇小说<<活动变人形>>日文版。

1993年

香港天地图书有限公司出版<<红楼梦启示录>>中文繁体字版。

1994年

出版<<王蒙文集>>（10卷，500万字），长篇小说<<失态的季节>>，长篇小说<<暗杀——3322>>。台湾风云时代出版股份有限公司出版<<红楼梦启示录>>中文繁体字版。台湾出版<<淡灰色的眼珠>>中文繁体字版。纽约出版<<坚硬的稀粥及其他>>英文版。

1995年

出版长篇小说<<踌躇的季节>>，短篇小说<<玫瑰大师及其他>>。发表文章<<我心目中的丁玲>>。

1996年

出版短篇小说<<满涨的靛汤>>，<<短篇小说之谜>>；古典文学论集<<双飞翼>>，<<红楼梦评点本>>；散文集<<宽容的哲学>>；作家自白系列<<我是王蒙>>。

1997年

出版中篇小说《春堤六桥》。发表文章《革命、世俗与精英诉求》。

1998年

出版意大利文版小说集《不如酸辣汤及其他》，《坚硬的稀粥》。

1999年

出版长篇小说《狂欢的季节》，论文集《王蒙说》。

2000年

出版长篇小说《狂欢的季节》，论文集《王蒙说》。2000年出版《王蒙旧体诗集》，《王蒙代表作》（该书被列入教育部2000年制订并通过的“高等学校中文系本科生专业阅读书目”）。出版散文集《王蒙散文》，中篇小说《歌声好像明媚的春光》，演讲集《王蒙讲稿》，新诗集《雨点集》。发表玄思小说《笑而不答》150则。

Appendix Three

王蒙简传

王蒙，1934年10月15日生于北京，旋即回到祖籍河北省南皮县龙堂村。4岁时再回北京。5岁上小学。10岁时跳级考入中学。11岁即与中共地下党建立了固定联系。1948年10月10日近14岁时入党，是中共地下党党员。

1949年调入新民主主义青年团(后改名为共产主义青年团)北京市委工作。1952年任东四区团委副书记。

1953年开始写长篇小说《青春万岁》。1954年开始发表小说作品，并参加了1956年全国第一届青年作者会议。1956年秋发表《组织部来了个年轻人》，并引起极大反响。

1958年错划为右派，1979年改正。1958年后在北京郊区劳动。1962年任北京师范学院教员。

1963年赴新疆，曾在伊犁地区农村劳动多年，并曾担任自治区文联编辑，维吾尔语翻译。1979年调回北京，任北京市文联专业作家。

1981年任中国作家协会书记处书记。1982年在党的第十二次全国代表大会上当选为中央候补委员。1985年当选为中国作家协会常务副主席，同年在党的全国代表会议上当选为中央委员。1986年至1989年任中华人民共和国文化部部长。1987年在党的第十三次全国代表大会上再次当选为中央委员。1993年任八届全国政协委员。1994年任全国政协常务委员。1998年九届全国政协常务委员。1996年，2001年在全国第五次、第六次作家协会代表大会上两次当选连任副主席。

自五十年代以来，出版小说，评论，散文，新旧体诗歌，杂文作品共一千余万字。被翻译成英，法，德，俄，日，韩，意，西班牙，匈牙利，斯洛伐克，塞尔维亚，荷兰，瑞典，挪威，罗马尼亚，保加利亚，阿拉伯，越南，希伯来，维吾尔，哈萨克等二十余种语言文字，并在相应国家或地区出版。作品多次在国内外获奖，并曾获意大利蒙德罗文学奖，日本创价学会和平与文化奖。

王蒙在国内外文学艺术界和学术界声名卓著，现任解放军艺术学院，南京大学，浙江大学，上海师范大学，华中师范大学，新疆大学，新疆师范学院，中国海洋大学，安徽师范大学教授，名誉教授，顾问与中国海洋大学文学院院长。曾应邀访问世界各大洲四十多个国家。曾任哈佛大学燕京学院特邀访问学者，美国三一学院校长级学者 (presidential fellow)，并以特邀嘉宾的身份参加国际笔会与世界出版工作者协会代表大会。为约旦作协名誉会员。

王蒙的人生经历可谓大起大落、几度沉浮。王蒙的作品反映了中国人民在前进道路上的坎坷历程，他也由初期的热情、纯真趋于后来的清醒、冷峻，而且乐观向上、激情充沛，并在创作中进行不倦的探索和创新，成为新时期文坛上创作最为丰硕、也最有活力的作家。